LECTURES

ON

BELLES LETTRES

AND

LOGIC.

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LECTURES

Sir Sajin Rajah

ON

BELLES LETTRES

AND

LOGIC.

BY THE LATE

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PART III.

COMPOSITIONS

IN

PROSE AND VERSE.

LECTURE XXXVIII.

HISTORY OF WRITING—MERITS OF ANCIENT AND MODERN WRITERS.

IN the laſt lecture, I finiſhed the diſcuſſion of ſpoken language, which completes the ſecond part of the preſent courſe. Order demands that I proceed to examine written language, conſiſting of the moſt eminent kinds of proſe and verſe.

One of the moſt ſingular appearances in the hiſtory of ſociety, is the progreſs of letters; and conſidering how extenſive the period is from their firſt illuſtrious diſplay in Greece to the preſent time, we can ſcarcely with-hold wonder that the number of compoſitions of merit is ſo ſmall. Climate, or natural cauſes, may have ſome influence; government cannot be doubted to have a great deal; but emulation, and the love of fame, ſeem to be the chief cauſes to which we are to impute the flouriſhing ſtate of every ſpecies of compoſition, except

oratory, which appears to be prompted chiefly by ambition and times of danger. As emulation and the love of fame are the principal caufes to which we are to afcribe the eminence of poets, philofophers, hiftorians, and critics, yet confpicuous exhibitions in any of thefe lines are to be expected only when the full and free exercife of the powers of genius and induftry is countenanced, at leaft not difcouraged by government; when fociety is fo far advanced, fo polifhed and enlightened, as to difcover and applaud what is meritorious; and when the exertions of genius are inftigated by rivalfhip. If we confult the hiftory of literature, we fhall find, that in the fortunate conjunctures in which all thefe favourable circumftances have concurred, authors of eminence have fprung up with rapidity, and in clufters, like plants from a hot-bed.

The progrefs of poetry, however, is not altogether regulated by the fame circumftances which are fuppofed to influence the production of profe compofitions; and epic poetry particularly feems to conftitute a remarkable exception. It appeared in Greece in the poems of Homer fome centuries at leaft before any compofition in profe which merited the attention of pofterity; for it is fcarcely fuppofeable that all productions in profe fhould have perifhed, while thofe in poetry remained. The fingular inftitution of bards, and the practice of reciting at feftivals and public folemnities the illuftrious

deeds of patriots and heroes, so consonant to the notions of a warlike and magnanimous, though an uncultivated and unpolished people, seems to have contributed to the early perfection of epic composition. Attachment to poetry might even introduce a contempt and dislike of prose, and may help to account for the late appearance of that species of composition. It is well known, that even the laws and public acts of rude communities were sometimes written in verse.

Among the first good compositions in prose which were produced in Greece, was probably the History of Herodotus, and it is the most early and best of that species which has descended to modern times. He lived between the Persian invasion and the Peloponnesian war, about four hundred and forty years before the birth of Christ, and was the dawn of the illustrious age of his country. From the time of his appearance to the expedition of Alexander the Great into Asia, (a period of less than one hundred and fifty years), were displayed all those conspicuous exertions of the genius of Greece, which all men of letters have hitherto admired, and all refined ages will continue to admire. The principal writers of this period were, Euripides, Sophocles, Thucydides, Isocrates, Xenophon, Plato, Aristotle, Demosthenes. Alexander the Great annihilated the liberty of Greece, and with it fled her spirit and her genius.

After the Romans had over-run the greater part of Greece, they were tempted to turn their attention towards the precious remains of literature and arts which that country had to exhibit. But ſo unpoliſhed ſtill were this great people, that in the ſix hundred and ſeventh year of their city, ſcarcely a hundred years before the termination of the commonwealth, Lucius Mummius, a Roman conſul, was ſo imperfect a judge of the value of the exquiſite ſtatues and paintings which he found in the plunder of the city of Corinth, that he took an obligation of the ſhipmaſter who was to convey them to Rome, to replace or repair them, if any of them were loſt or injured in the voyage. His only conception of their uſe was to grace his triumph, and the number, not the workmanſhip, was to himſelf and his countrymen the chief object of attention *.

Before the age of Cicero, Rome had produced few writers of eminence, except Plautus and Terence, both of whom, particularly the latter, ſeem entitled to little other fame than that of tranſlators from the Greeks. The pure period of Roman genius did not long ſurpaſs Cicero. It can ſcarcely be extended beyond the age of Livy, though ſeveral authors of great merit are to be found after that time. According, then, to this computation, the golden age of Roman genius did not much exceed

* Vel. Paterculi Hiſt.

one hundred years, and was somewhat shorter than that of Greece. The great ornaments of this period were, Lucretius, Cæsar, Cicero, Sallust, Tibullus, Virgil, Horace, Ovid, Livy. The revolution of the civil government affected the genius of Rome, as it had done that of Greece, with a shock from which it never recovered. But the genius of Rome languished much longer than that of Greece before it expired. Of all antiquity, no two periods were so refined as those of Greece and Rome I have mentioned. At no other times was literary merit to obtain such high praise, or were great men to derive so much emulation and improvement from one another. No other ancient nations, not even the Greeks and Romans themselves, were so high-minded, and so full of great views, in any other periods as they were in these.

After the termination of the golden age of Rome, genius gradually subsides, and seems to descend into a state of torpor, if not total extinction, in the cells of monks, or to wander unregarded in the desarts of Arabia, till the restoration of civilization, learning, and arts, aided by the useful invention of printing, caused her revive with a large portion of her ancient lustre. For a term, therefore, of near two thousand years, from the first appearance of letters in Greece, to the invention of printing in the beginning of the fifteenth century, no more than two hundred and fifty years can be found,

which were enlightened and adorned with the brightest displays of human genius; a demonstration either of the astonishing delicacy of literary merit, or of the slow and difficult steps by which society advances in knowledge and refinement.

Printing has so corrected and dispersed the most valuable productions of ancient and modern times, that scarcely any revolution in human affairs can be supposed to introduce such ignorance and error as prevailed before it was invented. With the introduction of an art so auspicious to learning, genius and industry assumed new vigour, and redoubled their efforts. The spirit of the sixteenth century caught fire from the publication and perusal of the illustrious remains of Greece and Rome, and was distinguished by an acquaintance with their writers and language, which has not yet been equalled.

The transition from the use of the Latin language, in which almost all the modern authors began to write after the revival of learning, and the hesitation under which literary men long remained, whether they should relinquish that language, and cultivate their own more imperfect languages, repressed considerably the efforts of modern genius. All men of letters regretted the labour and difficulty of writing in a dead language, and on topics which it often had not words to express. They felt also the disagreeable inconveniencies of having the knowledge of their labours confined to the

learned, inftead of diffufing ufeful or amufing information among all ranks of people, and of receiving that juft and general applaufe which ufually attends genuine merit. A few fuccefsful efforts gave conviction that modern languages were fully adequate to do juftice to the conceptions of the moft eminent authors; and it was found, that much lefs time and ftudy were requifite to acquire an intimate acquaintance with any polifhed language of modern Europe, than to qualify an author for writing with elegance in the language of ancient Rome.

The Italians appeared foremoft in this new path of fame. Before the invention of printing, they poffeffed a confiderable fhare of tafte, perhaps from a communication with Conftantinople, where learning fubfifted till the middle of the fifteenth century, when that city was taken and plundered by the Turks; and they wrote their own language with wonderful propriety. Before the beginning of the feventeenth century, Petrarch Dante, Bocaccio, Ariofto, difplayed in their works an extent of knowledge, a richnefs of genius, and an elegance of language, which have fcarcely yet been furpaffed. Taffo, Guarini, Davila, and Machiavel, have not obfcured the fame of thefe writers. England followed the example of Italy, and in the end of the fixteenth century, and the beginning of the feventeenth, her beft authors wrote her own language,

with a purity and correctneſs which are not always to be found in the latter part of the ſeventeenth century, and which have not even in the eighteenth been very often exceeded. The works of Hooker, Lord Bacon, Shakſpeare, the Homilies and Prayer-Book of the Church of England, not to mention the tranſlation of the Bible, preſent a propriety of ſtyle which is not always found in Milton, Clarendon, or Tillotſon, and ſcarcely in Dryden and Lord Shaftſbury. The civil wars of England infected her language and her taſte, with a degree of corruption which it required the merit of Pope, Addiſon, and Swift, to baniſh, and to re-eſtabliſh former purity. The highly-finiſhed productions of later times have not done much more than to regain primitive correctneſs.

The French began laſt to poliſh their language, but their progreſs was very rapid. Before the middle of the ſeventeenth century, they could boaſt of few authors whom any reader would wiſh to peruſe twice. Early in the eighteenth century, their language and their genius ſeem to have reached their higheſt eminence. Paſcal commenced this career, and was quickly followed by Malebranche, Flechier, Corneille, Racine, Boileau, Fontenelle, Moliere. Theſe authors retain the character of French claſſics: even the great names of Rouſſeau, Voltaire, and Raynal, have not aſpired to higher praiſe than to ſhare their fame.

While the greater part of the learned men of modern Europe were pleafed to write the language of ancient Rome, confcious of their inferiority on account of the difadvantages under which they laboured, they looked up to the ancients with the refpect which fcholars naturally entertain for their mafters, and prefumed not to rival them in the merits of execution and originality. But fcarcely had the French begun to write their own language with a purity which attracted the attention of Europe, when their national ambition was excited; they claimed to be held originals themfelves, both in refpect of matter and ftyle, and thus afpired to rival, if not to furpafs, the merit of the ancients. Hence arofe an extraordinary controverfy, which commenced in France, concerning the comparative excellence of ancient and modern writers, and which was agitated with great keennefs, and even afperity, at its firft appearance. Many learned treatifes were publifhed, many bold affertions were advanced. Boileau and Madame Dacier undertook the defence of the ancients, and afferted their right to fuperiority; Perrault and La Motte maintained the claims of the moderns. Much partiality, and abufe, and ignorance, as commonly happens in fimilar cafes, were difplayed in the courfe of the controverfy, relative to the refpective conftituents of the parties.

The difpute extended to England. The gentle, the humane, the indolent Sir William Temple,

was rouſed to engage in it, and undertook the cauſe of the ancients, which he ſupported with much learning, diſcernment, and good taſte. The ſentiments, however, even of this able champion, did not convey univerſal ſatisfaction; they were controverted, and attacked by ſeveral obſcure, but pertinacious writers among his countrymen. Society was peſtered and tired with the diſpute, till Swift expoſed the whole of it to ridicule, by the irreſiſtible vein of keen ſatire with which he has handled it, in his curious Treatiſe on the Battle of the Books in St James's Library.

But though the violence, and miſtakes, and miſrepreſentations of the firſt diſputants, have long ago ſubſided, yet ſo much ſolid foundation is the controverſy accounted to have, that we very frequently meet it in converſation; and ſo much inclined are many readers to obtain information concerning it, as to afford conſiderable currency to a learned eſſay publiſhed by Mr Dutens, a clergyman of the church of England. This author, in the courſe of other employments, had been obliged to conſult moſt of the ancient writers of chief reputation, and he ſcruples not to affirm, that, in all compoſitions of genius and taſte, their ſuperiority is palpable and inconteſtible, and that veſtiges are to be found in their writings of all the moſt brilliant diſcoveries in ſcience and arts. This author is entitled to more conſideration than any of his predeceſſors. He diſ-

plays no malevolence, or inclination to misrepresent either of the parties; he never supposes the reader is to be satisfied with his authority or interpretation; he presents on his margin the passages on which he founds his opinion, and leaves every reader a fair field to decide for himself.

In a controversy, then, which seems of importance sufficient to attract a little of our attention, we will endeavour to get possession of those principles by which a proper judgement must be supported. The neglect of this precaution has been the origin of much useless disputation in all controversies, but particularly in the present. It is always to be remembered, that no fair comparison can be instituted between ancient and modern authors, except where circumstances are nearly similar. We will not be so unreasonable as to complain that our poets do not equal Homer, or our orators Demosthenes and Cicero, if the dissimilarity of their circumstances rendered it impossible. We will not expect that our poets and orators should equal or surpass those of antiquity in circumstances so unfavourable, that, had the poets and orators of antiquity been in them, they would not have surpassed our own. We will not demand that the ancient philosophers should have made the same progress in science which ours have done, when the latter have had the advantage of all the researches and experience of the former, besides the aid of several subsi-

diary arts and syſtems then unknown. Another principle entitled to attention is, that the inferiority of the moderns, or the ſuperiority of the ancients, in different articles, is no reproach or compliment to the genius of either. There is no reaſon to conclude that vigour of genius is confined to one period of ſociety more than another. It depends on external cauſes; let the ſame cauſes exiſt, and the ſame vigour will be diſplayed. Guided by theſe ſolid principles, let us now inquire a little what are the facts.

That Homer muſt ſtill bear away the palm of Epic poetry from Virgil himſelf, and all the moderns, no candid critic will much heſitate to admit. He poſſeſſes more variety of character, more originality, more beautiful deſcription, more elegance and ſimplicity of ſtyle, than any other poet. But I will venture to maintain, that a great part of this excellence is to be imputed to the ſituation of the times in which he lived. The natural manners and magnanimity of thoſe times were particularly favourable to the ſimplicity and ſublimity of his ſentiments and ſtyle. The high honours conferred on bards, being conſidered as the ſages, the legiſlators, and the heralds of their age, as companions of Kings, and gueſts at all feſtivals, would prompt the livelieſt exertions of genius. He had all nature before him unoccupied, and all his pictures of her, at leaſt to us, wear the merit and charm of novelty.

Had either Virgil or Milton lived in the fame circumftances, I doubt not that they would have rivalled him in other particulars, and have furpaffed him in judgement and fublimity. They equal him in thefe qualities, notwithftanding the difadvantage of being obliged to imagine all the interefting fituations of their heroes, without having ever feen or converfed with fuch men. Offian derives his extraordinary merit from circumftances fimilar to thofe of Homer, from living and converfing with fuch men as thofe of whom he fung.

Euripides and Sophocles are the only tragic poets of antiquity, for the Romans produced none entitled to notice; and confiderable as their merit is in point of character, paffion, and ftyle, they feldom poffefs much excellence in point of fable. It was impoffible that they fhould deferve much praife in this article, for they wrote too faft to acquire it.—Of the few plays of Sophocles which remain, fcarcely any, except the Œdipus Tyrannus, can be faid to have much fable; they are often little more than mere dialogues, and the actors go and come without much apparent reafon. The tafte of the Greeks in tragic reprefentations could not be refined, when we reflect, that little more than thirty years before the time of Sophocles and Euripides, their theatrical exhibitions were no better than mufical entertainments, exhibited by ftrollers equipped in the moft homely manner. Thefpis was manager of

ſuch a band, and Horace deſcribes his cavalcade in the following words,

"Dicitur et Theſpis vexiſſe poemata plauſtris."

He had only one ſpeaker, who was introduced to give the ſingers ſome reſpite. Æſchylus ſucceeded him, and firſt preſented dialogue, or exhibited ſomething like a tragedy; he did not live above thirty years before Euripides and Sophocles. Theſe poets may ſurpaſs modern tragedians in ſimplicity and propriety of ſtyle, but it requires an uncommon reverence for antiquity to prefer them in every other view.

In comedy, every candid judge muſt give the preference to the moderns. The old comedy of the Greeks, in which living characters were introduced and ridiculed, though it might diſplay boldneſs and ſpirit, was the coarſeſt, groſſeſt ribaldry, that ever diſgraced a ſtage. The object of it was not more reprehenſible than the execution was indelicate. We cannot read, without the moſt lively feelings of diſguſt and contempt, the rough daubing of Ariſtophanes, by which the Athenians were inſtigated to put to death Socrates, one of the beſt men and worthieſt citizens they ever had. The moſt worthleſs licentious farce ever appeared on the Engliſh ſtage, is not ſo opprobrious. The new comedy, in which Menander and others excelled, and

of which we may form ſome notion from the tranſlations of Terence, though the originals are loſt, was a much more perfect ſpecies of compoſition. Simple, however, and natural and innocent as the dialogue is, it contains little wit or ſpirit, and leſs variety of character. Nearly the ſame characters recur in every play; and even the circumſtances in which they appear are not much changed.

Greece and Rome are unrivalled in oratory, but many circumſtances concurred to produce that effect. I explained the chief of theſe in the hiſtory of Eloquence. Had modern genius been placed in the ſame ſituation, I doubt not of its having made as eminent a figure.

Hiſtorical compoſition is the field in which comparifon can be made with moſt equity, becauſe circumſtances are moſt ſimilar; and here it muſt be admitted, that the reſpective merits of candidates are ſo nearly balanced as to create ſome heſitation. In purity and correctneſs of ſtyle, liveline ſs of deſcription, and candour of relation, no authors ſurpaſs Thucydides and Livy; but they muſt be admitted to be inferior to the beſt modern hiſtorians in forming an intereſting and inſtructive narration. The capital ſecret of compoſing hiſtory, namely, to extend or abridge the narration according to the importance of the matter, ſeems little attended to by the former. By the uſe of it, and that moſt en-

lightened ſpirit of political and philoſophical knowledge with which the latter have adorned their relations, they have communicated to them a degree of perfection for which we ſeek in vain among the ancients.

In moral philoſophy the merit of the ancients was conſiderable; but it was unfortunate that the Greeks did not apply very cloſely to the ſtudy of it, till the moſt illuſtrious age of their literature was paſt. Plato, indeed, has advanced many fine views of the ſubject, and adorned it with all the ornaments of a rich imagination. His example was followed by Xenophon in his Memorabilia Socratis, and both may be read with much emolument. But we ſee in them few principles or accurate delineations of the human mind; they either deviate into abſtract reaſonings, or content themſelves with recommendations of particular virtues from conſiderations of utility. The ſchools of philoſophy, eſpecially thoſe of the Stoics and Epicureans, which aroſe from the ruins of the ſchools of eloquence, generated controverſies and maintained ſyſtems, rather than improved the ſcience of the human mind. Mutual antipathies tempted both to puſh their doctrines to extremity, and to overlook the true ſcience of nature ſituated between them.

The Stoics conſidered man as a pure intelligence, and made little allowance for his poſſeſſing appetites and paſſions. They would ſcarcely permit him to

feel that he was a man, and confidered him unnaturally as independent of things about him. The Epicureans run to the oppofite extreme. They held him forth as formed principally to confult his pleafure and his eafe; and were not fufficiently affiduous to inculcate virtue as the means of obtaining both. Their fyftem was hoftile to all the manly and generous efforts of the foul, and contributed to fink its votaries into indolence or criminal gratification. We need not hefitate to pronounce, that the doctrine of the human mind is now better underftood than it was by either of thefe fects of philofophers.

But it is in the mathematical fciences, and in the knowledge of the fyftem of nature, that the fuperiority of modern attainments is moft confpicuous. The ancients extended not their inquiries beyond the properties of lines of the fecond order, called Conic Sections; and it does not appear that they applied the fcience of thefe to any ufe. It was referved for Newton to explain, by their means, the laws which govern the motions of the planets. We are told that the Pythagoreans were acquainted with the Copernican fyftem; but this acquaintance could hardly amount to more than conjecture, for they wanted every refource to proceed farther. They had no glaffes with which to make obfervations, and their ftudy of the heavenly bodies feems to have been directed rather to aftrology than to aftrono-

my. They might be admired by the ignorant inhabitants of Italy, among whom they lived, but their whimfical noftrums concerning abftinence from animal food, and the tranfmigration of fouls, rather fuggeft the character of empirics in philofophy, than of enlightened and rational inquirers.

Some people will conclude that Plato was acquainted with the circulation of the blood, which is fuppofed one of the moft illuftrious difcoveries of modern medicine, becaufe, in fpeaking of it, he employs the Greek word περιαγεθαι, which fignifies to be carried round. But if the ufe of figurative language is to be fuppofed a good argument for the knowledge of the ancients, there is fcarcely any knowledge of which they may not be fhown to be poffeffed. Had this doctrine been underftood by them, is it poffible it fhould never be mentioned in terms explicit and full, that no reafonings fhould be founded on it, no caufes of difeafes deduced from it? In a word, to improve our genius and our tafte, we cannot read the ancients too much; but we muft feek important additions to our knowledge, whether moral, political, or mathematical, among the moderns.

LECTURE XXXIX.

EPISTOLARY WRITING—FICTION.

IN the laſt lecture I delineated the progreſs of writing, and made ſome remarks on the controverſy concerning the reſpective merits of ancient and modern learning. I am now to treat of the different kinds of compoſition in proſe, and ſhall handle the following, in order: Epiſtolary Writing, Fiction or Romance, Philoſophical Writing, and Hiſtory.

Epiſtolary Writing recommends itſelf to attention by the eaſe and familiarity of the compoſition, and by the information it is ſuppoſed to convey concerning the private ſentiments of great men. We expect to find the author, not prepared in form to addreſs the public, with all his opinions carefully examined and ſcrupulouſly ſupported, his ſtyle poliſhed

and correct; but to discover a man of genius and knowledge, acquired by long industry and extensive experience, disengaged and easy among his friends, and communicating to them with dignity and freedom his well-digested observations. Or we expect to find writers of wit and sprightliness amusing themselves elegantly with trifles, but interspersing, even among these trifles, vivacity and good humour, sometimes insinuating unexpectedly shrewd and useful remarks on the conduct of life.

The capital charm of this species of composition, is to preserve the opinion that it is what it pretends to be, the private correspondence of two friends, and to prevent the suspicion that the correspondents had any intention their communications should be made public. To gain this end, the matter discussed should present something local or particular, which one of the parties, from a foreign situation, or superior knowledge, had an opportunity of acquiring, and which he was prompted by affection, or gratitude, or relation, to transmit to the other. The style should be easy and familiar, a little elevated above the tone of polite conversation, but never studied; no antithesis, no rounded periods, no ornaments that savour of thought and recollection; all should appear the first effusion of imagination and of the heart. We need not wonder that letters have always been received with particular favour by the public. When properly executed, they may

convey useful instruction; but of all kinds of writing, they are, perhaps, most calculated for amusement, and the greater part of readers seek no higher gratification.

The Greeks have left no eminent specimens of this sort of writing, for the Epistles of Phalaris deserve little notice. The earliest, and one of the best collections yet extant, are those of Cicero. They are written on a great variety of important and familiar topics, and we discover in them many political, critical, and philosophical observations, besides a great deal of valuable historical information. We survey the private characters of the author and his friends in many interesting situations; and the pictures they display of domestic happiness and attachment are not a little captivating. The appearance of private correspondence is well supported; and if the letters were intended to be published, the authors have concealed their intention with great address. The style retains all the careless dignity we should expect in the correspondence of great men, and the cast of conversation it presents demonstrates what great variety of forms their stately tongue could assume, and what a difference there was between the colloquial language of Rome, and that of her history or oratory.

The Epistles of Seneca possess no characteristic of this species of writing, but the name. They are

philosophical dissertations on morals, composed with all the smoothness and quaintness of that singular author. They may be read with advantage on account of the matter they contain, but, like every other part of Seneca's compositions, they shine with false ornaments, forced antithesis, abrupt sentences, and unnatural expression; a mode of writing no where so exceptionable as in a letter.

The letters of Pliny the younger, nephew of the natural historian of the same name, are composed in a much better manner, and are well entitled to a careful perusal. They contain a great deal of useful information, while they display good taste and an enlightened understanding. The writer, however, seems to consider it as some restraint on his genius, that he is restricted to the style of a letter. He deserts the simplicity and ease of that kind of composition. He is anxious to appear an author, and he is often tempted to step aside, and to assume that character in form. His composition, of course, savours of the style of dissertation, more than that of epistolary correspondence, and he is not at sufficient pains to conceal his design of having written for the inspection of the public. Had he given to his matter the form as well as the style of Essays, he would have afforded equal satisfaction to his readers, and would not have exposed himself to the censure of pretending to write for the use of his

friends, when he was actually composing for the benefit of the public.

Lord Bolingbroke's elegant Letters on History are liable to the same objection. They are manifestly written for publication, and were it not for their title and address, no reader would imagine that he perused any thing but an essay. The style, the arrangement, the ornaments, suggest no idea of intercourse with a friend. The latter disappears, and the public is found to be the nominal friend with whom the author corresponds. How different are these letters from those of the same author preserved in the large collection published under the name of Pope, Swift, and others, where he expresses the genuine sentiments of his heart with simplicity and ease? These letters, however, are among the most valuable writings of this eloquent author. They discover an extensive and well-informed understanding, a lively imagination, and an uncommon elegance of style. We regret the apparent hurry with which he writes, and the love of singularity and novelty with which he is actuated. He is much more ambitious to advance a new and brilliant, than a sound and well-digested opinion. He was, I believe, a candid, but an impatient inquirer. His investigations proceeded too much upon system, and he often found things to be what he wished or supposed them, instead of discovering what they really were. Had his industry been equal to his genius

and his taste; had he been as ambitious to be learned as to appear so; had he been equally fond of advancing useful truth, as of overturning what he rashly accounted established falsehood; had he distrusted his own opinion when he found it different from that of the greatest men, and learned to reconsider before he pronounced with confidence; had he, in fine, taken more time to polish his style, to correct faults, and to prune redundancies, he had reached the highest rank among the fine writers of his country, and had received a fame lasting as her language. But, as his works now appear, they display a noble genius misapplied, knowledge extensive, but inaccurate, and sometimes erroneous; and a style lively, expressive, and oratorial, but declamatory and careless. His posthumous writings favour of all the extravagance and fanaticism of philosophy. He would demolish all the systems and religions that ever were in the world, and he will scarcely allow any philosopher or theologian before himself to have possessed either reason or common sense. We feel resentment against the indiscretion of friends who would disgrace the memory of a great man by the publication of such wild opinions. They cannot avoid sinking fast into oblivion, but, unfortunately, they carry along with them the reputation of the author.

The letters of Pope, Swift, and others, display much wit, elegance, and taste, and will be read

with pleasure and improvement. We discover in them occasional strokes of philosophy, politics, and criticism, which indicate the most enlightened and cultivated minds in the authors. We could wish they had not been tinged sometimes with the disagreeable colours of spleen and resentment. Those of Swift have a great deal of epistolary merit; they are easy, sprightly, and instructive, and have no appearance of being intended for publication. They seem the first effusions of the heart, arranged by a penetrating understanding, and adorned by a fertile invention. All of them, at least all of them written before the decline of his health, fully support, amidst their trifling, the elevated opinion we should naturally entertain of the abilities of the author.

We cannot say so much for those of Pope. He had deservedly obtained higher fame than was ever gained by any poet in this island during his own life; and he could not separate one moment ideas of his dignity from any thing he wrote. Even when he corresponds with the fair sex, he is studied and correct. His sentiments are refined, his language is formal, his wit is learned; in a word, he seems afraid that some circumstances should discover Mr Pope was not a great man. The same anxiety, however, about his reputation, produced one good consequence, it made him collect and commit to the flames every composition which might injure his

reputation after death. His letters, therefore, though instructive, are destitute of the chief charm of such compositions. They admit us into no familiarity with the author, and they present nothing characteristic either in the matter or the style.

But of all the letters which this or any age has produced, the most finished, perhaps, are those of Lord Chesterfield. The genius of this Lord was peculiarly turned towards letter-writing. Lively, enlightened, cultivated, and refined, but fond of pleasure and variety, he was formed by nature for that temporary and brisk effort which a spirited and ingenious letter requires. His style is the perfection of such composition; familiar, flowing, perspicuous, and neat, nothing can exceed the beauty of its expression. It is dignified with ease, correct without formality, smooth without number. He assumes with facility any tone he pleases, and supports it with propriety. He can be grave, and even austere; he can descend to the most familiar trifling; he can assume the character of a philosopher, a critic, a politician, a man of the world, with equal success.

His Letters to his Son, however, owe much of their merit to the paternal anxiety with which he was actuated. This circumstance adds keenness to all his observations, and prompts the fluency of his style. He wished to influence by example, as well as advice. He exerts his whole power of persua-

ſion, and diſplays all the riches of his imagination and taſte. It is aſtoniſhing in what variety of views, with how many different arguments and illuſtrations, he has urged the importance of induſtry toward gaining eminence in life. Every letter, almoſt, takes up this theme, and every letter appears to recommend it by new conſiderations.

It is much to be regretted, that the principles of conduct he inculcates are not always of the pureſt ſtamp, and that he appears more concerned about ſucceſs than about the rectitude of the means by which it is to be obtained. He ſeems to conſider virtue, and learning, and qualifications of every ſort, as the implements only of eminence, and as of little account in themſelves. The graceful arts, the capacity of managing mankind by their caprices, their infirmities, or even by their vices, I am ſorry to obſerve, prevail too much in the ſyſtem of this great man. Neither is his wit always genuine; he ſcruples not ſometimes to deſcend into a wretched play of words called punning, when nothing better occurs.

The French, with all their natural vivacity of temper, and the familiar phraſeology of their language, ſeem not to have been very ſucceſsful in this line of writing. Both Belzac and Voiture have merit, but their ſtyle is too ſmart and brilliant; while it is deſtitute of the eaſe and ſimplicity of familiar correſpondence. The Letters of Voltaire

on the English Nation are mere essays, like those of Lord Bolingbroke. Madame de Sevignè possesses every excellence of style; it is a pity the subjects of her Letters had not been a little more interesting. Her fancy is lively, her wit sparkling, her sensibility exquisite. She had the art to deck trifles with a delicacy which would have rendered the influence of more important matter irresistible, and we cannot help wishing that she had made choice of such matter.

I should now finish this article by doing justice to the merit of an English lady, who has highly distinguished herself as a letter-writer, I mean Lady Mary Wortley Montague, were she not entitled to rank among authors of a superior class. Her letters possess very few ingredients of that species of composition but the form. Her style is dignified and elegant; her matter is curious and interesting; her reflections discover great knowledge of the world, an enlightened and penetrating understanding, enlarged views of government and manners. But the reader considers her rather in the character of a grave and instructive historian, than an amusing letter-writer.

The employment of fiction to convey amusement, and to inculcate wisdom and virtue, is very general. It is the object of fables, of epic and dramatic poetry, of novel-writing, and romance. Instruction is found to be more successfully and effectually con-

veyed by example than by precept. The latter takes hold only of the underſtanding, the former intereſts alſo the imagination and the heart. The events of real life are not ſufficiently numerous or varied, to produce much improvement from example; fiction, therefore, is introduced to ſupply that defect. The mode of teaching knowledge and virtue by example, is altogether unlimited in the field of fiction, becauſe no truth, whether political, prudential, or moral, can be ſuppoſed, to inculcate which a fiction may not be contrived. If the characters introduced are irrational, the fiction is called fable; if they are of the human ſpecies, it may be called, in different circumſtances, an epic poem, a dramatic poem, a romance, or novel. It is of the two laſt of theſe kinds I am to treat at preſent, the diſcuſſion of the other kinds is reſerved to a future opportunity.

A romance or a novel is a hiſtory of events altogether fictitious, in which ſuch characters are introduced, and placed in ſuch ſituations, as may promote moſt effectually the deſign of the author, to inſtruct or to amuſe the reader. The author is reſtrained by no limitation but that of probability. If he keep within this boundary, he is perfectly at liberty to feign characters and ſituations; he muſt not, however, tranſcend probability, otherwiſe he demoliſhes his own charm, he ſhocks the faith of the reader, and prevents the operation of that de-

ceit, by means of which alone he either can intereſt or improve.

Romance-writing is ſaid to have come originally from Aſia, and to have made its firſt appearance among the Greeks, in the Mileſian Tales; which were relations of love-intrigues, abounding with licentiouſneſs and indecency. Lucian, and Petronius, are ſuppoſed to have derived from them moſt of that ribaldry which they have not ſcrupled to introduce into their writings. It is farther imagined, that this kind of compoſition travelled from Rome to Provence in France, where it ſubſiſted during the darkneſs of the middle ages; and becauſe it was written in a ſort of barbarous Latin, called Roman, it obtained the appellation of *Romance*, which it ſtill preſerves. It was in ridicule of this ſpecies of fiction, transformed and in ſome meaſure realiſed by knight-errantry in the days of chivalry, that the firſt romance was written, which is entitled to much notice, and of which the merit is ſo great as to ſecure to it immortal fame; I mean the Don Quixote of Cervantes.

The exquiſite humour and refined ſatire of this performance cannot now be completely underſtood, becauſe the extravagance and folly of the manners to which it refers no longer exiſt. The books of chivalry were occupied with love-adventures of a ſingular kind, and in ſome reſpects the reverſe of thoſe of the Mileſian Tales, from which they de-

rived their origin. The damfel in romance was fo far from approaching licentioufnefs, that the capital ingredient in her character was the moft referved and unconquerable chaftity; the chief quality of her lover is courage. She is mounted on a white palfrey, as an emblem of her purity; and to filence even fufpicion, fhe muft be approached by no male creature but a dwarf. She muft be infenfible of every attachment to the other fex, till fome misfortune fhall have brought a knight-errant to her relief, who is fuppofed to travel about without intermiffion in order to defend oppreffed innocence, particularly that of the fair. When he has had the high happinefs of refcuing her from danger, and, in confequence of this merit, prefumes to approach her, and to profefs the moft reverential attachment to her perfon, fo far muft fhe be from indulging the leaft appearance of regard, that fhe is reftrained by gratitude only from fpurning from her the humble fuitor with contempt. He muft remain many years in the moft mortified ftate of probation, attempting to recommend himfelf by every act of profound refpect to her perfon, and by every hardy feat of prowefs which may render him worthy of the angel he adores. She muft be the fubject of his converfation by day, of his dreams by night; her gratification muft be the object of all his actions; her name adds ftrength to his arm, and courage to his

mind. The currency that books of this fort found over Europe, but particularly in Spain, where fome veftiges of the fame fpirit are faid ftill to remain, demonftrates that the manners they paint muft have been general, and that thefe derived their origin from the times of chivalry, when the principal characteriftics of a champion were courage and gallantry.

Againft fuch unnatural and extravagant opinions and conduct, Cervantes difcharged the whole artillery of the moft poignant fatire; and the attempt was not more fuccefsful than it was meritorious. In vain would argument have been employed againft fuch folly, ridicule was the proper weapon with which it was to be attacked. Accordingly Don Quixote is fuppofed to be a knight-errant, who engages in a thoufand abfurd adventures in order to gain the peerlefs Dulcinea del Tobofa, that chafte and fhy miftrefs, whom no folicitations could win, nor the moft meritorious feats of courage could perfuade to make him happy. Nothing can be imagined more fantaftic than the character of the lady; nothing can be conceived more ridiculous than the conftant contraft between the gravity, the folemnity, the heroic deportment of the knight, and the caprice of his opinions, the abfurdity of his reafonings, the frivolity of his atchievements.

To heighten the raillery, the author has, with much addrefs, given him an attendant, in the lan-

guage of chivalry called a ſquire, a plain, candid, honeſt, well-meaning man, of whom the worſt that can be ſaid is, that he has ſo little diſcernment as to follow ſuch a maſter. The knight tolerates the rude behaviour and ſervile ſentiments of the ſquire, only becauſe he finds him uſeful, but treats his admonitions with the moſt ſovereign contempt. The ſquire venerates the noble character of his knight, and the eminent virtues of his miſtreſs Dulcinea; but inſinuates, by many broad hints, that his maſter, amidſt all his ſublime notions and valorous enterpriſes, was deſtitute of common ſenſe. In a word, notwithſtanding all the ignorance in which we are involved of the manners that gave birth to this very humorous performance; we can peruſe very few books whereby our riſible powers will be more frequently or more effectually excited.

With all the humour and ſatire of Cervantes, but with more wit and learning, Butler attacked the fanaticiſm and hypocriſy of the ſeventeenth century, in his famous romantic poem called Hudibras. Never, perhaps, were manners more expoſed to ridicule, or deſerved it better. Never did manners more diſgrace human nature, virtue, and religion, and never were they delineated with more poignancy and acuteneſs. The characters of the two ſects then in vogue, the Preſbyterians and Independents, exhibited in thoſe of Hudibras and his ſquire; the particular tenets and modes of argumentation diſ-

played in the long, formal, and verbose disputations they hold with one another, are all finished in the most exquisite style, and in the highest vein of ridicule. Not only their extravagant opinions are exhibited, and exposed, but all the scholastic jargon and sophistry with which they were accustomed to support them. The author has adorned the whole work with an uncommon display of learning, wit, and curious satirical rhymes, which perpetually provoke the risibility of the reader. Few poems contain as many pertinent thoughts in fewer words. Few poems display as much good sense, useful knowledge, and just criticism.

In the course of the preceding century a new species of fictitious history, called Novels, has been introduced, which, if properly executed, might prove an useful and entertaining school of knowledge and virtue. The design of this species of fiction is to descend into common life, and to paint the opinions, characters, and conduct of persons in the active scenes of business or amusement. Books of this sort apply to the feelings of all mankind, because such books present pictures with which they are acquainted, and display foibles and follies, vices and virtues, of which they have had experience. The dignity of real history will seldom permit it to delineate the ordinary transactions of life; it seizes the great events of nations, and dwells with delight on wars, and revolutions, and public calamities,

that it may enlarge the underſtanding, improve the heart, and convey important political and military inſtruction. But it ſoars above the reach of the greater part of mankind, and often preſents to them nothing amuſing or inſtructive. An hiſtory, therefore, which ſhall aſſume characters from common life, and exhibit them in probable and intereſting, though fictitious circumſtances, if conducted with a virtuous deſign, may communicate genelar amuſement and inſtruction, and may prove very beneficial to ſociety.

A deſign, however, of this ſort, requires abilities to enſure ſucceſs much more eminent than are enjoyed by the far greater part of the numerous candidates who, in this line, daily ſolicit the favour of the public. It requires that the author ſhould paint characters and ſituations with a large portion of the genius of a comic writer, that the incidents ſhould be probable and intereſting; the characters ſingular, but not unnatural; and the narrative conducted ſo as to engage the attention, and to improve the manners and the heart. How different are the compoſition and materials of the greater part of noveliſts! Their productions hold forth neither incidents, characters, nor ſituations, that can either entertain or inſtruct. They are inſipid, jejune, and trifling in the higheſt degree. The authors often cannot even write the language in which they pretend to communicate their thoughts.

It is none of the least marks of the idle or dissipated spirit of the present age, that such publications should find so many readers. But it were well if performances of this sort were barely void of merit, if it could be pronounced concerning them, that they do no harm. The authors, often conscious of incapacity to attract readers by laudable means, appeal to their irregular appetites and passions. They exhibit the most luscious and corrupted scenes to inflame the imagination and the passions, and they scatter poison with a liberal hand.

Several exceptions, however, must be made to this general censure, of which the chief are, Gil Blas, by Le Sage, and the novels of Fielding, particularly Tom Jones. Both these authors display much knowledge of the human heart. Their characters are all natural and strongly marked, while the situations into which they contrive to throw them, are often well calculated to communicate amusement and improvement. The deception of the reader is complete. It is scarcely in his power to suppose that there is any thing imaginary in the incidents he surveys. The characters too are often contrasted with a delicacy which nothing but a vigorous imagination, and an intimate acquaintance with the world, could have dictated. Vivacity, wit, and humour, sparkle in every page.

In point of morality, however, we cannot help giving the preference to the foreigner. Though his

characters are often engaged in vicious ſcenes, yet they are neither ſo frequent, nor exhibited with ſo little colouring, as ſimilar ſcenes are in the performance of the Engliſh noveliſt. The latter fails not to hint the impropriety of cenſurable conduct; he ſeems, however, ſometimes, not to be diſguſted with the ſurvey of it, and to laugh where he ſhould reprehend. Along with theſe eminent ſpecimens, ought to be mentioned the novels of Richardſon and Miſs Burney, particularly Sir Charles Grandiſon and Cecilia, which alſo have great merit.

The ſtyle of a novel ſhould be an imitation of the language of the perſonages whom it introduces, and Fielding has often carried this imitation ſo far, as to employ provincial idioms and ſpelling. But even on the tongues of the characters who may be ſuppoſed to ſpeak with purity, the expreſſion ſhould not aim at much dignity; eaſe, fluency, and correctneſs, ſeem to form the higheſt merit to which it ſhould aſpire.

LECTURE XL.

PHILOSOPHICAL WRITING—ESSAYS—SYSTEMATIC COMPOSITIONS.

I MEAN not to reſtrict Philoſophical Writing to the literal ſenſe of the words, but to conſider it in an extended ſignification, as comprehending every performance in which is found any general reaſoning, or obſervation, whether on manners, politics, morality, criticiſm, natural philoſophy, or metaphyſics. Theſe ſubjects are diſcuſſed commonly in three kinds of treatiſes, Eſſays, Syſtems of Science, and Dialogues. I ſhall examine briefly the principles, manner, and ſtyle of each.

Eſſays, for many years paſt, have been the moſt popular ſpecies of philoſophical writing. The modeſty of the title, the brevity to which they are reſtricted, the vivacity and temperate ornament they

admit, have co-operated to recommend them both to writers and to readers. If a writer has collected a few thoughts on any ſubject, whether from reading or obſervation, he throws them into the form of an eſſay, where they appear with propriety and grace. If he has examined a variety of uſeful or intereſting topics, but has not ſufficiently digeſted or extended his ideas to form them into ſyſtems, he arranges them into ſeparate eſſays; and however unconnected the ſubjects may be, the eſſays appear with perfect conſiſtency in the ſame volume. The variety, inſtead of hurting, recommends the publication, as the reader from that circumſtance expects additional amuſement and inſtruction.

All readers, particularly men of buſineſs, are fond of this ſpecies of writing, becauſe it promiſes ingenious obſervation, and important information, in the moſt expeditious and agreeable manner. They conſider the author as a reſpectable citizen, who has ſomething new to add to the general ſtock of knowledge and amuſement; not as the full and formal author of a ſyſtem, who muſt ſpend a great part of his time in arranging and communicating what is commonly known. They can find intervals of buſineſs to peruſe an eſſay; they cannot find leiſure to travel through a large ſyſtem, which they are not certain will compenſate their labour. Manners, criticiſm, morality, politics, even the abſtract ſciences, have often been handled in the

form of essays. The approbation of the public has been repeatedly and strongly testified, by the rapid and extensive sale with which many specimens of them have been attended.

It is, perhaps, to be imputed chiefly to this species of composition, that knowledge and refinement have been so generally diffused as they are at present. Many past ages have had individuals to produce qualified to be compared with the most illustrious men of science who adorn the present age; but no preceding period ever saw such an enlightened body of the people, or beheld as much knowledge, without the parade of it, so generally diffused. Had science and arts continued to be discussed in systems, this fortunate consequence could not have happened; it would have been prevented by the bulk, the technical terms, and even the dulness of such compositions. The essence of science consists in reason and common sense; and there are very few general truths which may not be understood by a plain man of a sound understanding, if, stripped of technical terms, and formality of system, they are communicated in simple and intelligible language. I assert not that such a man may always comprehend the proofs by which these truths are supported; I mean only that he may understand the truths themselves, and may employ them for the practical purposes to which they are subservient. If society owe these important benefits to

essay-writing, no wonder it has had a very favourable reception. Few species of composition have been so much entitled to regard.

In respect of composition, an essay is similar to an ode, it may admit any style the author shall chuse to adopt. It may be easy and familiar, gay and ornamented, concise and argumentative, or it may be oratorial, and even sublime. The general rule holds here as in other cases, to suit the style to the matter, and to exhibit the matter in a manner as simple, sprightly, and popular as possible. The forbidding aspect of system, and the popularity of essay-writing, are pertinently illustrated by some works of the late Mr Hume. He composed an abstract, dry, systematic book, on human nature, which had employed much of his time and labour, and from which he expected considerable reputation. He was disappointed and mortified; the book was scarcely ever called for, and soon sunk into oblivion. He resolved, however, not to relinquish the fruit of his profound researches. He concluded that the manner, rather than the matter of the book, was the cause of its disgrace, which induced him to dress it up in another and a more engaging form. He accordingly republished the substance of it in essays, adorned with all the ingenuity of thought, vigour of invention, and elegance of style, for which he is remarkable; and the attempt

was attended with all the succefs he could have defired.

But it is to his political effays chiefly that this writer is indebted for his reputation as a philofopher. In them he difcovers an extent of information, a boldnefs of genius, and candour of inveftigation, which do him great honour. He throws much light on the topics he treats, and it is difficult to decide whether the reader is more amufed or inftructed. When we reflect on his other merits, we regret his caprice and fcepticifm in all his refearches, where either religion or morality is concerned. The greateft geniufes have fometimes the greateft weakneffes; and a philofopher may be on one fubject extremely patient and impartial, who, on another, is full of prejudice and dogmatifm. Education, and a love of fingularity, often prepoffeffes men without their perceiving it; and they fometimes feem to confider their candour on one topic as a fufficient apology for their partiality on another.

The effays, however, to which the public has been moft indebted for communicating extenfive knowledge and refinement, are the periodical papers publifhed under the titles of the Tatler, the Spectator, and the Guardian, and afterwards under thofe of the Rambler, the Adventurer, and the World. All thefe effays aim at innocent amufement, but many of them affume a much more im-

portant tone, to communicate uſeful knowledge concerning manners, morality, and criticiſm. They are all ſhort and lively in the compoſition, ſimple and gently ornamented in the ſtyle. They are ſure to engage the approbation of the reader, either by the reprehenſion of ſome impropriety or ſlight immorality, or by advancing ſagacious remarks on diſcernment and prudence in the conduct of life. They venture not to arraign iniquity with the dignity and ſeverity of the moraliſt; they chuſe to ſatiriſe, rather than to reprehend. If ſometimes they aſſume the language of grave inſtruction, they ſuddenly relinquiſh it, and return to their eaſy and familiar manner of ſporting with the imagination and feelings of the reader, that, under the character of a pleaſant companion, they may inſinuate uſeful information and advice. It is no wonder that ſuch agreeable compoſitions ſhould have recommended themſelves to all ranks of people, and ſhould have been received with the moſt flattering partiality.

Of theſe eſſay-writers, however, the reader will perceive that the merit is not nearly equal. Addiſon ſhines conſpicuous above all the reſt, and nothing can be ſuppoſed to ſurpaſs his merit in this walk. In painting odd or ſingular manners, he poſſeſſes every excellence. Nothing indeed can be imagined more replete with humour than the characters of Will Honeycomb, and Sir Roger de Coverly. No writer ſo ſucceſsfully expoſes the follies

and errors of mankind. No ſtiffneſs, no affectation, no falſe parade in his ſtyle; he is perſpicuous, ſweet, and elegant. All his Eſſays, however, are not equally finiſhed. In his papers on the Pleaſures of Imagination, he has touched on moſt of the topics connected with his ſubject, but he ſeems not to have poſſeſſed theory ſufficient to exhibit them in the moſt luminous order. Even his language partakes of the diſorder of his ideas; it is ſometimes careleſs and inaccurate. His critical papers on Milton alſo diſplay much taſte and reading, but neither do they penetrate far into the principles of ſound judgement. They are chiefly employed to remove objections, and to eſtabliſh the comparative merits of the Britiſh bard with thoſe of the favourite Epic poets of Greece and Rome. He ſeldom attempts to reaſon from other authority than that of Ariſtotle; and he rarely appeals to human nature, the moſt infallible ſtandard of juſt criticiſm.

The eminence of Addiſon's papers procured, and ſtill ſupport, the reputation of the firſt periodical works in which he was concerned. We cannot diſcover much ground of praiſe in the eſſays of his aſſiſtants. Steele himſelf ſeems to be one of the moſt frivolous of all the candidates for fame in this line, who have at any time laid their pretenſions before the public. Inſipid, jejune, trifling in matter, diffuſe and vulgar in manner, if we except ſome papers

of humour, it is difficult to difcern in him much title to applaufe.

The fucceeding authors are not deftitute of the literary merit which diftinguifhes their predeceffors. They exhibit much knowledge, ingenuity, and fagacity; but they are all too grave, and they deviate too much into the didactic manner of differtation. They tell a ftory, rebuke a foible or a vice, and recommend difcretion and virtue with great zeal and benevolence; but they are void of the varnifh of the agreeable companion; little wit or humour give poignancy and effect to their reprehenfions; no facetious and pleafant graces gild their precepts, and intereft the imagination in their behalf. The field of fuch writing was in fome meafure pre-occupied, and the tafte of the public exalted and refined, by the inimitable papers of Addifon. They could not otherwife have failed in gaining a moft favourable reception. For though they cannot pretend to rival Addifon, they certainly leave all his companions far behind them.

The merits, however, of the Rambler, the Adventurer, and the World, muft not be fuppofed of the fame fpecies. The firft is marked with all the fingularities of the author, with this additional unlucky circumftance, that in no kind of writing could they have appeared with lefs advantage. Pompous, formal, and oftentatious, he may deferve much praife in grave, moral, and critical difcuffions; but

how shall these awful qualities comport with the ease, the familiarity, the charms, and the smiles of a periodical essay. Conscious of the necessity of attempting something of this sort, in spite of all his natural gravity and solemnity, he assumes sometimes the free and disengaged manner of a pleasant writer, but the reader cannot be persuaded that the appearance is altogether natural. Much useful matter, however, and many excellent dispositions and principles, are exhibited and recommended in the work.

The Adventurer holds a middle station between the formality of the Rambler and the simplicity of Addison. The authors are serious and sentimental. They present many excellent moral and political essays, written in a style pure and correct; but they frequently mistake what is diffuse for what is easy. They spin out and spread so thin their matter, with the view apparently of rendering it familiar, that the reader seems to be entertained with words instead of ideas, and peruses a whole paper before he finds a few thoughts fully explained.

The World is still less grave and formal than the Adventurer, and approaches nearest to the easy dignity of Addison. The thoughts are expressed with neatness and simplicity. They display a knowledge of mankind, of the foibles and follies, the attachments and antipathies of characters, which are marked with discernment, sometimes with much delicacy and humour. This performance well de-

ferves the attention of the public; and has fcarcely yet attained that degree of refpect to which it is entitled.

Syftems were the fecond fort of philofophical writing of which I intended to treat. I mean not to reftrict my obfervations to fyftems of fcience, properly fo called; I fhall extend them to all works which treat any branch of knowledge fyftematically, or which deduce it from proper principles, fcientifical, critical, or political.

In compofing fyftems which explain the laws and phænomena of nature, namely, thofe of Natural Philofophy, Aftronomy, Chemiftry, Natural Hiftory, where the chief object of the reader is to increafe his knowledge, all that fhould be expected from the author is perfpicuity, and the rejection, as much as poffible, of all technical phrafeology and fcholaftic terms. In illuftration of this rule, I am happy to obferve, that the two greateft philofophers are alfo the beft philofophical writers, I mean Lord Bacon and Sir Ifaac Newton. Thefe eminent men conceived their ideas with clearnefs, precifion, and vigour, and they have transfufed thefe qualities into their ftyle. Bacon's Inftauratio Magna, and Newton's Optics, are, perhaps, the beft-written books on fcience in the world. But in proportion as fyftematical difcuffions recede from abftract fcience, they become more fufceptible of polifhed compofi-

tion and ornament; and accordingly all critical, moral, and political inquiries, admit moderate embellishment. They are not so abstract as to render it difficult for the understanding to discover the meaning, and their subjects naturally interest the imagination and the heart. Though in deducing the principles, in defining and unfolding the theories, and in explaining the phænomena which such inquiries present, a considerable degree of abstraction may be necessary; yet in illustrations, in examples, in exhibiting enlarged views of society and nature, with which they should be chiefly occupied, the composition may assume a higher tone, and may indulge in many of those ornaments that constitute elegance. Our own language can furnish several performances of this species, which have merited and have obtained high reputation.

Locke's Essay on the Human Understanding is well entitled to notice in this line. He had the honour of forming the first intelligible and popular system of metaphysics, which, however abstract and uninteresting in their own nature, always insinuate themselves into every other speculation, and are indeed the foundation of all science or general knowledge. He discusses his subject in a distinct and regular manner; he treats first of the origin and nature of ideas, and of the operations of the mind concerning them; next, of the different kinds of knowledge, and the modes of communicating them,

He writes alſo with much candour and ingenuity; and it is no ſmall praiſe to his underſtanding, that the greateſt maſters of that difficult branch of inveſtigation have acknowledged his eminent abilities, and the obligations they owe to his capacity and diſcernment. The character of his ſtyle is well ſuited to his ſubject; it is ſimple, clear, and ſparingly adorned, particularly by metaphors; and it is amazing what degree of intereſt he has found means to interweave with a ſubject naturally ſo dry.

It is unfortunate, however, that his expreſſion is often careleſs and inaccurate, and that many of his periods are conſtructed with negligence. His own taſte was incorrect, and the taſte of his age was not very refined. He was ſo anxious to write with the eaſe of a gentleman, that he forgot ſometimes the decent poliſh which the ſame character demands. He was ſo much afraid of the formality of a pedant, that he neglected ſometimes the accuracy of a grammarian.

Lord Shaftſbury was almoſt his cotemporary, and deſerves to be mentioned after him. This Lord had formed his taſte on the finiſhed models of antiquity, and preſents a colour of ſtyle which had nothing reſembling it in his own language at the time he wrote. There is, however, no author in any language, perhaps, whoſe productions are ſo unequal. The firſt volume of his Characteriſtics poſ-

sesses a considerable share of merit; the two treatises of the second volume are entitled to high praise; but the third volume is much inferior both in subject and style. There are in it few marks of the eminent qualifications of the author of the two former volumes.

His best work, the Inquiry concerning Virtue, is written in a scientific and masterly manner. Its views are sound, enlarged, and satisfactory, and the style is correct, expressive, and melodious. Few treatises can exhibit more ingenuity and research, associated with more decent and pleasant ornament. Both the understanding and the imagination of the reader receive as ample gratification as can easily be combined in the same performance.

In his Moralist he assumes a higher, but less correct note. The purpose of this treatise is to display the harmonious and grand concurrence of all the operations of nature to produce and preserve general good, and to hold forth the system of the universe as arranged and administered by the most benevolent and perfect wisdom. Having thus conjured up the most delightful and captivating object of admiration, he frequently steps aside to prostrate himself before it, and to worship it. In these sublime ecstasies, his manner becomes most reprehensible. His language is commonly pure, always melodious; but here he overstrains. He continues too long wound up to a pitch he cannot support, he deviates

into affected ſublimity of ſentiment, and a forced elevation of ſtyle. His perſonifications are too frequent, his metaphors are purſued beyond all bounds of perſpicuity and propriety, and his circumlocutions to elevate his expreſſion are often affected. The reader wanders as in an enchanted manſion; he ſtrives in vain to graſp and retain the fleeting images; his imagination is captivated with the drapery of the ſcene; he ſtands ſtill and wonders at the ſplendour, the gaiety, or the glitter of the colouring with which it is adorned.

Several authors, captivated with the magnificence and finery of Lord Shaftſbury's manner, have attempted to imitate him; but no attempt can be ſuppoſed more hazardous. The higheſt merit of his ſtyle, though it could be attained, would not form the beſt, and it is nearly allied to that affectation and conceit which conſtitute the worſt. The common fortune of imitators is to miſtake the blemiſhes for the excellencies of an original, to attain the former and forego the latter. Some of his Lordſhip's imitators have ſhared this fate, and have improved upon his rant and his fuſtian, without acquiring any portion of his commendable qualities to counterbalance theſe defects.

The laſt performance I ſhall mention is Elements of Criticiſm. I take notice of it for two reaſons; its own eminent merit, and the near relation it bears to

the ſubject of the courſe which engages our attention. This work has been honoured with the moſt favourable opinion by the public, but has not been received with more approbation than it deſerves.— After criticiſm had been repeatedly canvaſſed by ſome of the moſt diſtinguiſhed philoſophers and rhetoricians whom the republic of letters has beheld for two thouſand years paſt, it might, perhaps, have been ſuppoſed, that little new or intereſting could have been advanced on the ſubject; yet, whoever will carefully peruſe the treatiſe of which I ſpeak, will not, perhaps, judge very erroneouſly if he conclude, that this uſeful art owes more to the author than to any former critic. The palpable, the permanent, the univerſal foundation of criticiſm, is the faculties, the feelings, and the operations of the human mind. To theſe the author has had continual recourſe, and it is amazing how ſucceſsful he has been in elucidating many of the principles and rules of the art.

The ancient critics had recourſe to the ſtudy of orators and poets, to form their taſte and guide their opinions. They decided concerning beauty from authority, not from nature. Ancient criticiſm is accordingly a collection of precepts, ſupported by examples from the works of eminent writers; but exhibits few appeals to conſciouſneſs, few reaſonings concerning beauty, few invariable principles of taſte. The enlightened and philoſophical author

of the Elements ſeizes this ſtrong and luminous ground; he diſcuſſes criticiſm, as he would deduce a ſyſtem of morals, by conſidering its congruity or incongruity to human nature; he inveſtigates what is naturally beautiful or deformed, elevated or debaſed, proper or improper, agreeable or diſagreeable, antecedent to all authority and opinion, and employs theſe unerring and unalterable elements to guide his deciſions, not only concerning literary productions, but all the fine arts. Thus criticiſm becomes a branch of philoſophy, as well as morals; and the foundations of both ſeem to be laid equally deep in the conſtitution of the human mind.

If farther elucidation were requiſite to diſplay the propriety and ſolidity of this ſyſtem, that ſatisfaction may be obtained from the eaſe and expedition with which it ſolves the phænomena of criticiſm. The author's principles are illuſtrated by numerous examples, extracted from the moſt eminent authors, ancient and modern, and the principles and examples mutually reflect much elucidation on one another. It is not much to be wondered that this mode of inveſtigating criticiſm did not occur to Ariſtotle, Longinus, Cicero, or Quinctilian. We have lately only been delivered from that philoſophy which forms ſyſtems concerning the productions of nature, without conſulting the phænomena, inſtead of the legitimate and proper method, which

begins with the phænomena, and from the examination of them deduces the fyftem. The former method, in ancient times, prevailed in the inveftigation both of morals and natural philofophy, and it was too great an effort to be expected, even from the eminent authors I have mentioned, to adopt a different procedure with regard to criticifm. From all we can learn, however, concerning the candour and ingenuity of thefe authors, we cannot hefitate to conclude, that they would have confidered this manner of treating their favourite art as a fplendid and as an ufeful illuftration of the faculties and powers of the mind of man.

Though I hefitate not to pronounce the Elements the beft book on criticifm, I pretend not to fay that they are perfect. This was a degree of merit too high to be attained in a firft attempt. The author has not inveftigated all the principles of the art, nor has he always elucidated fully even thofe he has difcuffed. His decifions are fometimes erroneous, and his examples are not always the moft pertinent. But I offer thefe remarks rather to demonftrate the candour of the opinion I have ventured to advance, than becaufe I think them any cenfure. It is aftonifhing he has erred fo feldom; not to have erred at all, furpaffed the frailty of humanity.

LECTURE XLI.

DIALOGUES—HISTORY.

DIALOGUE is a ſpecies of writing deviſed in imitation of converſation; and as any topic may be the ſubject of converſation, ſo that of dialogue-writing is equally extenſive. Abſtract ſcience, politics, morals, taſte, manners, may all furniſh matter for dialogues. The purpoſe of them is to add to a diſcuſſion all the graces and charms of polite converſation. Inſtead of forming a dry and lifeleſs narrative of the various views in which a ſubject may be conſidered, the author introduces different perſonages to deliver theſe views. He adds dignity and intereſt to the diſcuſſion, by the gravity and eminence of the characters, by the occaſion of their meeting, and by the reſpect and avidity with which their ſentiments are received by the hearers. If, beſides, the characters are properly contraſted, and

palpably marked; if each ſpeaker propoſes his ſentiments, as he would do in a real converſation, in a manner and words deſcriptive of himſelf, and not as a mere puppet who lends his name to the opinions of the author; the performance becomes highly dramatic, and few compoſitions can more deeply engage the attention of the reader.

From this proſpect, it appears that dialogue is an extremely delicate ſpecies of writing, and is not to be attempted but by authors of high ſenſibility, as well as of uncommon ingenuity. If it be deſtitute of the characteriſtic charm, in which its chief merit conſiſts, it is inſipid and diſguſting; and the difficulty of communicating that charm, increaſes in proportion as the ſubject is more refined and remote from the common affairs of life. All ſubjects alſo are unfavourable, where one of the ſpeakers is obliged to undertake long narratives or long diſſertations, becauſe the ſprightlineſs and variety of the dialogue diſappear, and the author ſeems to addreſs the reader in his own name. It is employed with moſt ſucceſs when it is moſt natural; when the ſubject is characteriſtic, as well as the manner; and when the topics are ſuch as may eaſily be ſuppoſed to have been canvaſſed in a real converſation by the perſons of the dialogue. It will add much to the merit of the work, and aſſiſt the efforts of the author, if the diſcuſſion be not altogether imaginary; if the dialogue has actually taken place,

and the author has been, what he commonly pre-tends to have been, a real hearer.

I conceive this reality to be the circumstance which communicates such conspicuous superiority to the dialogues of Plato and Xenophon, above those of all other writers, ancient or modern, Cicero himself not excepted. The conversations related in the dialogues of the two first writers actually took place; and Socrates really said the greater part of the things in the manner, and perhaps in the words, in which they have represented him. No other circumstance can explain why these authors chose him as their chief speaker in almost all their dialogues, but the dignity and credibility which they knew that circumstance would add to their matter, from the general conviction of their countrymen that it was real. Is it possible that two scholars of Socrates, immediately after his death, should have ventured to exhibit him as holding conversations with people then alive, who could have invalidated what they advanced, had it been fictitious; or that they would have chosen to diminish the influence of their compositions, by founding them on narratives manifestly incredible?

The contrary supposition bears every mark of probability. Socrates mixed much with his countrymen, with the view of disseminating among them the principles of useful knowledge. Plato and Xenophon were present at many of these conversations.

and as Socrates never committed his opinions to writing, they were aſſiduous to preſerve the valuable information they had heard him convey. They found they could do moſt juſtice to his ſentiments, by repreſenting them, as much as poſſible, in the manner he delivered them. They poliſhed, perhaps, the expreſſion; but from real incidents they derived theſe characteriſtic ſentiments and language, which charm ſo highly in their dialogues, and which the moſt delicate and vigorous imagination can ſcarcely be ſuppoſed to have ſuggeſted.

The character of Socrates in theſe authors is perfectly the ſame, though their reſpective geniuſes are very different. The ſame dignified, virtuous, active, and acute philoſopher, continually appears. He keeps the ſame end conſtantly in view, the recommendation of integrity and wiſdom, as the only means of happineſs. A ſimilar train of honeſt, frank, ingenious, and ſometimes witty interrogations is diſplayed. Had the converſation been hypothetical, each of theſe lively writers would have formed a diſtinct character of their chief ſpeaker, and the Socrates of Plato would have been as different from the Socrates of Xenophon, as the genius of the former is different from that of the latter.

Plato poſſeſſed a bold and penetrating underſtanding, attended by a rare companion, a warm and vigorous imagination. The character of his dialogues

is derived from the prevalence of these faculties they are abstract and argumentative, but occasionally highly ornamented. All the speculations, however, which he puts into the mouth of Socrates, have a relation to morals, to the general good, or to the wisdom of the First Cause. These are the principal topics of the famous dialogue, of which he lays the scene in prison, on the day Socrates was to die by drinking poison. The philosopher, although he had only a few hours to live, discusses with the utmost composure the doctrine of providence and of a future state, and dies with all the magnanimity of the most exalted virtue. Nothing can be devised more ingenious and refined, than the arguments advanced in favour of a future state. They may not, perhaps, satisfy the understanding, but every reader must admire the address which communicates to them such an appearance of plausibility.

The imagination of Plato is no less distinguished in the part of the dialogue which exhibits the last scene of the life of Socrates. The mind of the reader is kept in high suspence during the conversation, by the consideration of the awful event which was to succeed it; and nothing can be more picturesque and pathetic than the account of that event. The noble behaviour of the philosopher, his sentiments, his looks, his attitudes, the looks and feelings of the different spectators, are all de-

eated with the most lively colours. Human nature has seldom made a better figure than in the death of Socrates. Human genius could scarcely have furnished that interesting scene with a more consummate painter.

Xenophon was more a man of the world than Plato. He engaged in public business, and either possessed no genius for profound speculation, or disliked that species of writing. Good sense, a sound judgement, and a delicate imagination, were his peculiar qualities; and all his Socratic dialogues inculcate the substantial and useful maxims of wisdom and virtue. Scenes of this sort are susceptible of a more characteristic cast than those of refined speculation; and for this reason, I should not hesitate to maintain, that the dialogues of Xenophon are more probable and natural, are more nicely ornamented, than even those of Plato. But of both these authors it may be affirmed, that it is not in the reader's power to believe their dialogues are not copies of real conversations, while he can scarcely preserve the opinion, that those of all other authors are not manifest fictions.

Even Cicero himself scarcely affords an exception to this observation, if we set aside his elegant dialogues De Oratore. Either from an inclination to imitate the illustrious philosophers of Greece, or from a predilection to this species of writing, he has composed the greater part of his philosophical

and critical treatises in the form of dialogues. De Natura Deorum, Questiones Tusculanæ, De Le- bus, De Amicitia, Orator, De Claris Oratoribus and several others, are in this form. In all these treatises, however, I cannot, I confess, discern any thing very characteristic, either in the matter or the expression. An Epicurean, an Academic, or a Stoic, appear, and severally advance and maintain the tenets of their respective sects. But the style and manner of each are nearly the same. We dis- cover manifestly the language and sentiments of Cicero in every one of them. The ill success even of this illustrious author insinuates another strong presumption, that the uncommon merit of the Grecian dialogues is derived chiefly from their being copies of real conversations; for I can scarcely admit, that the vivid imagination of Cicero was not equally qualified with those of Plato or Xenophon, to have formed a characteristic dialogue, had the merit of the composition depended on the imitative powers of this faculty.

I cannot be induced to entertain a more favourable opinion of the Moralist of Lord Shaftsbury. He complains that dialogue-writing was disused and disliked in modern times, because, however exact a picture it might be of a philosophical conversation, no such conversation existed, and that politics and pleasure had engrossed the attention of all parties of men. We should naturally have ex-

pected that his Lordship's practice would have formed an exception to his censure; and we are surprised to find ourselves disappointed. Theocles, and Philocles, and Palemon, are mere names, totally void of character. They have nothing peculiar either in their sentiments or expression; the author appears palpably in the sentiments and language of them all. The same species of thought, the same pompous, figurative, and declamatory style, form the phraseology of each.

When such has been the fate of dialogue-writing in the hands of many eminent authors, both ancient and modern, unless when they copied real conversations, we have little cause to wonder that this species of writing should be discontinued by the cultivated taste of modern times. Affectation is always disagreeable, but it is particularly so in literary and philosophical compositions. If the reader cannot be persuaded that the dialogue is genuine, but perceives that he converses with the author, sometimes in one character, sometimes in another, while his sentiments and dress continue the same, and nothing is changed but his name, he is disgusted with such foppery, and must conceive him to act the fantastic part of an empiric in letters, rather than the reputable function of a grave and dignified writer.

There is, however, one species of imaginary dialogue which deserves to be excepted, and which has

ſucceeded well both with ancients and moderns, I mean that where perſonages are introduced to ſpeak of themſelves, and to deſcribe their own opinions and views, commonly called Dialogues of the Dead. This ſpecies is generally nothing more than a delineation of the characters and ſituations of the perſonages, recommended by the advantage of placing them in the moſt delicate and intereſting contraſt. But as the characters can neither be ſuppoſed to meet, nor to converſe without reſtraint in this world, the ſcene is laid in the future world, where the parties, void of paſſion, prejudice, and fear, communicate their ſentiments of their capital views, and actions in life, with all the eaſe and freedom of pure intelligences. This ſort of dialogue muſt be intereſting, becauſe generally character itſelf is the ſubject of it; as ſoon as that ſubject is exhauſted, the author ſeldom introduces another. He ſeparates the parties, and terminates the converſation. Such compoſitions, accordingly, are never extended to great length, ſo as to exhauſt the patience of the reader. Though they may be ſometimes ſerious, and even pathetic, yet the general features of them are animation, acuteneſs, and diſcernment of thought; ſimplicity, propriety, and gentle ornament in the ſtyle.

Lucian and Lord Lyttleton are the chief authors in this line of compoſition, and both have great

merit. The former is jocular and fatirical; the latter is animated and ferious. The former ridicules the caprices, follies, and abfurdities of men; the latter attempts to convey to them important, political, and moral inftruction. The former laughs at the religious creed and ceremonies of his countrymen; the latter avoids all levity on ferious fubjects. The former flightly defcribes the perfonages he introduces, and is more anxious to make them exprefs a humorous and witty, than a characteriftic fentiment; the great object and the capital view of the latter, is to caufe the perfonages delineate themfelves, communicate their fentiments of their motives and conduct in life, and of the principal tranfactions in which they were concerned. Lucian is entitled to the praife of difcernment and vivacity, but he is a loofe moralift, and incurs the cenfure of impiety. Lord Lyttleton difplays great knowledge of men, manners, and government, and is a warm friend of decency and virtue.

As this fort of dialogue is fufceptible of much intereft and inftruction, it is fomewhat furprifing that it has not been more frequently employed. The author has a large field before him, becaufe he may bring together perfonages of the moft diftant ages and nations, and may contraft their opinions, acquifitions, and manners. They might difcufs their refpective national merits, and might exhibit whatever was moft remarkable in their government,

ſcience, and arts. They might delineate, alſo, the leading principles, prejudices, and education of themſelves and of their countrymen. If executed with delicacy, the entertainment would be exquiſite, and could ſcarcely fail to engage the attention of the public. The ſucceſs of Lucian and Lord Lyttleton affords great encouragement; for although the abilities of both are reſpectable, they cannot be admitted to be the moſt eminent.

The laſt ſpecies of Proſe of which I intend to treat is Hiſtory, and under it may be comprehended annals, memoirs, and biography. It is the moſt ſerious, dignified, and inſtructive kind of compoſition. It propoſes to teach that moſt important wiſdom which conſults the general happineſs of mankind, by conducting with diſcretion the affairs of nations, or large communities. It undertakes to illuſtrate the progreſs of human nature, in its moſt meritorious efforts towards refinement, in government, laws, manners, ſcience, and arts. It is converſant about the greateſt events the world has to exhibit; the riſe and fall of nations; the general calamities, or the general corruptions which form the cauſes of theſe great events; the convulſions of ſocieties, which ſpend themſelves in all the horrors and devaſtations of war; and all the acts of heroiſm or puſillanimity to which theſe dreadful conjunctures give birth. The attention of the reader is

roused and engaged by the interest and the grandeur of the objects he surveys, and he learns wisdom both from the merits and the demerits of the actors; by the former he is instructed to regard and to promote the happiness of large bodies of men; by the latter he is taught to oppose the progress of what must terminate in their misery or destruction.

The subject and the design of history readily suggest the qualifications requisite to the historian, and the laws which should regulate his compositions. His first qualification is to procure the best information, and to communicate it with impartiality. "Ne quid falsi dicere audeat; deinde nequid veri non audeat. Ne qua suspicio gratiæ sit in scribendo, ne qua simultatis."—*Cicero de Oratore.*

Truth is the glory of history, and the circumstance which chiefly distinguishes it from fiction. No author should attempt this species of writing who either cannot procure all possible knowledge of the facts, or will not communicate that knowledge with fidelity. The best information cannot sometimes be attained, but more frequently the indolence of the author does not permit him to investigate it. In composing a history of transactions at the time they happened, complete intelligence can seldom be procured. If an author was not an actor in the scenes he relates, his knowledge of them in most cases will be circumscribed; and though he was an actor, it

can feldom be perfect. Reafons of ftate, or the intereft of the community, generally render the public repofitories of authentic intelligence inacceffible to a private individual; and a fubordinate actor feldom knows more than the local tranfactions he has been employed to execute or fuperintend.

Private repofitories are referved in concealment by the delicacy or the attachment of the friends of public actors, who blufh fometimes to fee expofed even the eminent virtues of their relations, but who more frequently defire to bury in oblivion their errors or their crimes. Thefe obftacles are fo infurmountable, that no author has written with much fuccefs the hiftory of his own times, unlefs he was uncommonly fortunate in refpect of information; unlefs he had entire command of the operations of which he gives an account, like Cæfar and the late King of Pruffia; or was favoured, like Davila, with full freedom of accefs to thofe who poffeffed that command.

But, in all other cafes, the indolence of the hiftorian is accountable for the deficiency of his information; and it is wonderful how liable to cenfure in this article are fome of the beft writers. The immenfity of irkfome labour neceffary to fuccefs, is fome apology, though it is not a good excufe. To fearch for and confult original papers, is one of the moft tirefome and difagreeable employments which

can occupy a man of genius. The voluminous loads of printed lumber he muſt alſo ranſack, is often equally unpleaſant, and more unprofitable. In ſuch ſituations, hiſtorians of more genius than application abridge their labour, but they maim their information. They follow too cloſely the accounts and views of ſome one of the original authors, and they occaſionally quote and conſult others only when theſe are ſuppoſed to deviate from the relations of their capital author. It were to be wiſhed that ſome eminent hiſtorians had no concern with this remark.

The arguments for impartiality are ſo obvious and cogent, that in ſpeculation we ſhould ſcarcely expect to encounter a violation of them. Such, however, is the imbecility of human nature, or ſo ſtrong are the temptations, that imperfections of this ſort are far from being rare. Men are often partial when they know it not; and in this caſe, whatever opinion we may entertain of their capacity and diſcernment, we muſt exculpate their hearts. Had we none but failures of this ſort to reprehend, the complaints of partiality would be either leſs frequent, or worſe founded, than we generally find them.

An hiſtorian ſhould be a man of the moſt extenſive candour and enlargement of mind; he ſhould be independent, not only of attachments to individuals and to parties, but even of partialities to nations; he ſhould appear a pure intelligence, a citi-

zen of the world, a friend of nothing but of truth and virtue. Party and national prepoſſeſſions are the moſt difficult to be eradicated, and few of the beſt hiſtorians have been able altogether to extirpate them. A free ſtate is moſt likely to produce an hiſtorian actuated by party-prepoſſeſſions. The natural predilections every man bears to his own country, are apt to inſpire him with national ones.

Hiſtory, in the hands of a party-writer, reſigns all regard to integrity; it conceals facts, or diſguiſes them, and becomes the apology of faction, much more than a record of truth. The greater part of hiſtories both of England and Scotland were long ſhamefully disfigured with this indecent ſpirit; and were it not that a candid inquirer has acceſs to compare oppoſite accounts, and to correct both by recurrence to original papers, the truth in many caſes muſt have been irretrievably loſt. This degree of candour, however, has begun but lately to operate, and it has been attended with the moſt remarkable ſucceſs. It has permitted us to enjoy the high honour of producing eminent hiſtorians to be added to our other conſpicuous examples of literary merit.

National attachment is a ſpecies of partiality leſs reprehenſible, and commonly leſs unreaſonable. It often, I believe, deceives the poſſeſſor. He is apt to imagine he does no more than juſtice to the poli-

tical and military merit of his fellow-citizens, when he extols their exertions at the expence of their rivals. He conceives his countrymen to be as wise and brave as their own accounts proclaim them, and he disregards the representations of their enemies as fabulous or false, when they interfere with what he has been always taught to consider as truth. The Roman historians appear to have entertained manifest marks of national prejudice against the Carthaginians. The latter seem to have been the most industrious and opulent people of antiquity. They were the most formidable enemies the Romans ever saw, and the antipathies of parties probably corresponded to their rivalships. The mercantile enterprises and navigations of the Carthaginians appear to have surpassed all similar efforts among the ancients; and so great were their national credit and reputation, that many of the coasts of the Mediterranean, and some of those of the ocean, are said to have depended on their commerce, and to have furnished them with mercenaries. Their progress in manufactures was probably considerable, but the fertility of their country in corn was a general object of envy. Agriculture had become an art. Mago, an eminent citizen *, wrote in the Carthaginian language a large treatise of twenty-eight books upon this subject, which the Senate of Rome ordered to be translated into

* Steph. Dict. lib. ix. c. 17.

Latin, and from which Virgil is ſaid by Servius to have tranſcribed much of his Georgic knowledge. Yet, with all theſe illuſtrious qualifications, the Roman hiſtorians have ſcarcely left the Carthaginians a ſingle national virtue. They ſtigmatiſe them for faction, cruelty, and cowardice, and they have made a proverb of the "Punica fides." This reflection falls chiefly on Livy, who ſeems always to preſerve perfect candour and moderation, unleſs when faſcinated by the magnificent idea of the Roman grandeur. His ſpeculations alſo about the probable ſucceſs of Alexander the Great, had he attacked the hardy and warlike Romans inſtead of over-running Greece and a great part of Aſia, ſavour ſtrongly of a ſimilar partiality.

Livy, I doubt not, ſincerely thought the Roman merits, civil and military, the moſt eminent that ever had appeared in the world; but he ſeems to have been apprehenſive that this truth was not ſufficiently clear, unleſs thoſe of the Carthaginians and Macedonians ſhould be found to be much inferior. Poſterity, however, generally does juſtice to the injured party. It receives with ſuſpicion the accounts of the partial hiſtorian, and interprets favourably every circumſtance which may contribute to re-eſtabliſh the reputation of the people miſrepreſented.

LECTURE XLII.

HISTORY.

ANOTHER important qualification of an hiſtorian, is a knowledge of human nature, and of government; an acquaintance with the human heart, and of the ſcience of politics. Hiſtory is an account of the actions of men operating in large bodies, but conducted by individuals; and it conveys not complete ſatisfaction, unleſs theſe actions are connected with their cauſes, the political ſprings or the private paſſions from which they originated. Without aſſigning cauſes, hiſtory is no better than a gazette: when theſe are juſtly exhibited and properly interwoven, it becomes a moſt inſtructive and amuſing compoſition. The great tranſactions of nations, wars and negotiations, are almoſt always the reſult of ſome important intereſt, real or apparent, of which they long to be poſſeſſed. They

seem to inherit no other principle of action, and they are very little, if at all, influenced by the motives which prompt so frequently the conduct of individuals, a sense of honour and of equity. The connections of relation, of friendship, of gratitude, of commercial intercourse, even the most solemn treaties, are often found of little force against the irresistible power of interest. The sense of honour, that most powerful feeling among individuals, from the restraints of which even the most abandoned men are seldom altogether emancipated, is scarcely known among nations. If their ambition is successful, it is always crowned with applause; if unsuccessful, it meets with reproach, but the reproach is not pointed against the indiscretion and imprudence which are supposed to attend it, not against the injustice of its claims, or the arrogance of its pretensions.

The interest of nations is always interwoven with the views of individuals, and is commonly promoted or sacrificed according as it favours or opposes these views. This circumstance adds much intricacy to the science of politics, as the actions of individuals are much more perplexed and unaccountable than those of communities, being influenced by a much greater variety of motives, ambition, pride, vanity, revenge, caprice, honour, wisdom, justice. The business of the politician is to unfold the means and the manner by which all the causes operate

their effects under different forms of government; and it is the work of the hiſtorian to apply the concluſions of the politician, in explaining the ſprings of the tranſactions he relates. The hiſtorian is much indebted to the politician, and both are under obligations to the moraliſt, who delineates the proper conduct of individuals in the different relations of life. But though the hiſtorian borrows a great deal of his moſt intereſting matter from the moraliſt and politician, he is not rendered inſolvent by ſuch copious draughts. He makes ample compenſation by the valuable collections of uſeful facts with which he furniſhes theſe writers, to illuſtrate their principles, and to ſupport their ſyſtems.

A good hiſtory, then, is a chain of cauſes and effects which are recorded together, and which mutually illuſtrate one another. The effects, or the tranſactions, the author muſt receive from authentic monuments or records; the cauſes, or the political department, are the offspring of his ingenuity. It is his buſineſs to deviſe and inveſtigate the cauſes, and to conjoin them with the effects, ſo that from both he may form a ſyſtem of human affairs.

The hiſtorian very early began to hold communication with the moraliſt, to cenſure or praiſe actions, according to their conformity to the principles of virtue and reaſon, and to deduce practical reflections for the benefit of his reader. This, however,

ſeldom proved an intereſting or an uſeful work. The reflections were either frivolous, or too obvious to engage attention; and they often appeared to be tacked to the narration, inſtead of growing out of it. They were ſtill more unpalatable, when the hiſtorian aſſumed the character of the moraliſt in form, and pretended to declaim in the ſtyle of diſſertation. I mean not that a hiſtorical narrative ſhould not be as moral as poſſible; nor do I ſuppoſe that it will be either leſs inſtructive or leſs agreeable on that account. I reprehend only the vulgar and inartificial manner in which it is ſometimes executed. There is great difference between a moraliſer, or an inſipid compoſer of practical inferences, and a refined inquirer into human nature. The former is continually obtruding muſty remarks, the latter preſents a picture of the mind which conveys the moral leſſon with energy. Let the hiſtorian teach virtue in this perſuaſive manner. Let him inſinuate and recommend the principles which ſhould guide the action in the courſe of his account of it; and let the reader obſerve, in the concluſion, the conſequences which have reſulted from the obſervation or the neglect of theſe principles. The reader cannot avoid liſtening to ſuch inſtruction; it will inſure his recollection, it will fix itſelf in his memory, and it muſt influence both his principles and his conduct.

The union of hiſtory with politics is a fortunate

improvement, for which we are indebted chiefly to modern times. We have no reafon to wonder at the imperfection of ancient hiftory on this head, for the fcience of politics itfelf was not then brought to perfection. The Greeks and the Romans had no experience of the proper powers which balance and circumfcribe a free conftitution, though their politicians have pretended to find thefe in the governments of Sparta, Carthage, and Rome. The object of the Greeks in their political contefts, was not to conftitute a perfect and regular democracy in the government of Athens, or a legitimate mixed conftitution in that of Lacedæmon. Each of thefe ftates thought their own turbulent and fluctuating government the beft that could be devifed. Their great object was to obtrude their refpective conftitutions on one another, and on all their allies. The beft teftimony they could receive of the friendfhip of any ftate, and the fureft document of the continuance of that friendfhip, was the adoption of their conftitution and their laws.

Commerce and finances alfo, with all the political regulations attending them, were in a great meafure unknown. The Lacedæmonians never poffeffed either trade or revenue. The Athenians had little commerce, and can fcarcely be faid to have had a revenue, except for a period of eighty years, from the Perfian invafion to the end of the Peloponnefian war, when they loft the greater part

of their allies and colonies. From experience ſo limited no proper regulations could be adopted, and even the groſſeſt abuſes and defalcations, either were not detected, or paſſed unpuniſhed. While the republic ſubſiſted, the Romans were as little a commercial people as the Greeks, and ſeem not to have poſſeſſed much fixed revenue. In times of peace they incurred little national expence, except in building public edifices, or in making roads. All the great offices of ſtate were deſtitute of pecuniary emolument; the ſenators, the conſuls, the prætors, ſerved their country without compenſation. No ſoldiers were retained in arms in time of peace, and in time of war they received pay only during actual ſervice.

The Romans furniſh not a ſingle political writer. The Greeks exhibit two eminent ones, Ariſtotle and Plato, had they diſcuſſed their ſubjects in a proper manner, or had they not been either mere hiſtorians of the different forms of government, or deviated to the oppoſite extreme, and launched at once into the regions of ſpeculation. Ariſtotle takes the former line, Plato purſues the latter. Ariſtotle enumerates and explains the political conſtitutions of chief conſideration then known, the Athenian, Spartan, Syracuſian, Carthaginian, with the powers of the different parts and officers of each; but he ſeldom reaſons like a philoſopher, and ſeems not to apprehend that any ſyſtem could be formed

of government. Plato afcends above human nature in his fpeculations, and confiders individuals as what they fhould be, not as what they are. He forms an Utopian government; he affumes principles, and adopts reafonings, not applicable to any civil conftitution compofed of men. When fuch was the ftate of civil government, and of the fcience of politics, ancient hiftory could not be fuppofed to avail herfelf very much of its aids. Hiftorians could neither be politicians, nor could their readers be fenfible of the defect.

The laft quality of hiftory of which I fhall take notice, relates to manner and ftyle. The importance of the matter about which it is converfant, the interefting nature of the tranfactions it exhibits, the ufeful leffons it pretends to teach, all demand a ferious manner and a dignified ftyle. Every thing vulgar, flovenly, or inaccurate, all levity, quaintnefs, and affectation, all fuperfluous ornament, falfe glitter and parade, whether in fentiment or expreffion, are highly unfuitable, and fhould find no quarter from any reader. The chief hiftorians, ancient and modern, have in all thefe refpects much merit to claim. Thucydides, Livy, and Hume, poffefs all the propriety, dignity, and gravity that can be defired. Voltaire is the only author I recollect who has attempted to interweave wit with his narrative. But, notwithftanding all the artifice and vivacity with which he has recommended it, the

mixture ſtill appears unnatural, and not a little groteſque.

The ſtyle of hiſtory ſhould be perſpicuous, preciſe, nervous, and elegant. It admits every inverſion to improve the melody that is not inconſiſtent with perſpicuity, but it reprobates every appearance of art, as in no ſpecies of compoſition affectation is more offenſive. While the author poliſhes his language with the utmoſt aſſiduity; while he conſiders the choice and arrangement of his words with the greateſt care; while he rejects all vulgar, redundant, and ambiguous phraſeology, and ſelects the moſt pertinent, pure, and expreſſive, he muſt appear ſuperior to ſuch minute attentions, and ſeem to regard only the dignity and utility of the matter he communicates. Dramatic or heroic poets are, perhaps, more excuſeable in admitting the appearance of art, than the hiſtorian. Theſe authors are ſuppoſed and allowed to conſult the gratification of the ear as one of their objects, but we cannot eaſily reconcile the gravity and importance of hiſtorical compoſition with the ſtudy of ſuch inconſiderable ſources of pleaſure. We will much more readily pardon the contempt of them, diſplayed by the admiſſion of ſome degrees of harſhneſs both in the choice and in the arrangement of the words.

On extraordinary occaſions, however, in deſcribing civil convulſions or military operations, the tu-

mults of the people, or battles and sieges, and in delineating characters, the historian may animate his conceptions, and elevate his language. The mind of the reader begins to warm with the subject, and the writer should second and gratify that impulse: he may then venture to address both the imagination and the heart. He may change his arrangement from the full flowing manner of tranquil narration, to the abrupt and rapid phraseology of sentiment and passion; he may admit bold metaphors and comparisons, and even some of the more striking figures, interrogation and antithesis. Here several of the ancient historians shine with conspicuous lustre. The account of the plague at Athens by Thucydides, and his descriptions of the invasions of Attica by the allies of Peloponnesus, are executed in the most masterly and picturesque manner. The ideas of the reader must rival in vivacity those of the spectator.

Livy and Sallust scarcely yield, in descriptive powers, the superiority to the Greek historian. The former abounds in specimens, and, if the subject is interesting, he never fails to succeed. He has displayed all the powers of a rich imagination in the relation of one of the most memorable incidents in the history of the Romans, the capture of their legions in the pass of Caudium. The Samnites had artfully drawn them into that perilous situation, in which all resistance was madness, so that an entire

army of this haughty republic, with the two consuls at their head, were obliged to submit to the ignominy of laying down their arms, and of passing as captives, under the yoke. The stratagem by which this remarkable event was accomplished; the nature of the pass; the surprise of the Romans when they found themselves surrounded; their behaviour when they surrendered and complied with the terms of the capitulation; are all delineated with the most lively and glowing colours. I cannot refrain from inserting an extract from this admirable picture, which describes the feelings of the soldiers when the consul returned to the camp, after consenting to the terms of the capitulation, and the troops began to put it into execution.

"Alii alios intueri, contemplari arma mox tradenda, et inermes futuras dextras, obnoxiaque corpora hosti; præponere sibimet ipsi ante oculos, jugum hostile, et ludibria victoris, et vultus superbos, et per armatos, inermium iter. Inde, fœdi agminis miserabilem viam, per sociorum urbes, reditum in patriam, ad parentes; quo sæpe ipsi majoresque eorum triumphantes venissent. Se solos, sine vulnere, sine ferro, sine acie victos; sibi non stringere licuisse gladios, non manum cum hoste conferre; sibi nequicquam arma, nequicquam vires, nequicquam animos datos. Hæc frementibus hora fatalis ignominiæ advenit, omnia tristiora experiundo factura,

quam quæ præceperant animis. Jamprimum, cum singulis vestimentis, inermes, extra vallum exire jussi; et primi traditi obsides, atque in custodiam abducti. Tum a consulibus abire lictores jussi, paludamentaque detracta; tantam inter ipsos qui, paulo ante eos execrantes, dedendos lacerandosque censuerant, miserationem fecit, ut, suæ quisque conditionis oblitus, ab illa deformatione tantæ majestatis, velut ab nefando spectaculo, averteret oculos. Ita traducti, sub jugum, et, quod pene gravius erat, per hostium oculos; quum e saltu evasissent, etsi, velut ab inferis extracti, tum primum lucem adspicere visi sunt, tamen ipsa lux, ita deforme intuentibus agmen omni morte, tristior fuit."

Though the descriptive powers of Sallust are eminent, they are not equal to those of Livy. The appearance of art, which is too conspicuous in his narrative, becomes more remarkable in his descriptions. He degenerates sometimes into affectation, and his attention appears to be divided between his matter and his style. The reader stands still to wonder at the nicety of his composition, and the smart antithesis with which it is adorned. The account of the battle fought by Marius the consul against Jugurtha and Bochus, may be consulted to illustrate these remarks. I shall produce the following extract.

"Atque interim Marius, fugatis equitibus, accurrit auxilio suis, quos pelli jam acceperat. De-

nique hostes jam undique fusi. Tum spectaculum horribile in campis patentibus; sequi, fugere, occidi, capi, equi atque viri afflicti; ac multi, vulneribus acceptis, neque fugere posse, neque quietem pati; niti modo, ac statim concidere; postremo, omnia qua visus erat, constrata telis, armis, cadaveribus, et inter ea humus infecta sanguine."

The vigour of imagination exhibited in this quotation I admit to be very great; I complain only that the expression is too showy, and that the historian has not been sufficiently assiduous to conceal his design of exciting the admiration of his reader. If any person wish to contrast the merit of these writers with that of a modern historian, he may consult Dr Robertson's narrative of Queen Mary's procession through the city of Edinburgh, attended by the guards of the Reformers, after her forces had been defeated in the field. He will there find a very elegant and masterly style of description, but resembling the manner of Livy more than that of Sallust.

Herodotus is the most early historian whose merit has been sufficient to ensure him immortality. He lived a little previous to the most illustrious period of Greek literature. He was born before the time of the Persian invasion, and finished his history between it and the Peloponnesian war, when the

ſhining period of the genius of Greece commenced. The object of his work is to give an account of the wars and negotiations of the Greeks, from the time of Cyrus the Great to the end of the Perſian invaſion, which includes a ſpace ſomewhat leſs than an hundred years.

If we conſider the total want of records, and even of books, from which he could extract authentic information; if we conſider the laudable efforts he made to compenſate theſe defects, by travelling into the countries of which he was to write, Egypt, Babylonia, Phænicia, Scythia, and Thrace, in order to procure verbal and traditionary intelligence when no better could be obtained, inſtead of being ſurpriſed that he ſhould retail reports and legendary ſtories, we have the beſt reaſon to acknowledge high obligations to him, for preſerving the only information which exiſted, and which, without his interpoſition, muſt have been for ever loſt. It muſt be confeſſed, indeed, that the means by which he procured his information, the nature of it, and the pleaſing romantic air his ſmooth flowing ſtyle communicates to it, diminiſhes his credibility as an hiſtorian, and tempt us to conclude, that he was a ſimple retailer of fiction, inſtead of a ſagacious relator of truth: but he does not deſerve the cenſure theſe circumſtances would infer. He often diſtinguiſhes between what he thought authentic, and

what he fuspected to be equivocal, and he fometimes advertifes his reader of the reafons of his opinion. It muft be admitted, however, that he does not poffefs all the dignity of an hiftorian, though he difcovers great liberality and candour; and the fimplicity of his manner has been generally admired.

He recited his hiftory at the Olympic games, which was then a fafhionable mode of publifhing a literary production; and the univerfal approbation with which it was received is faid to have excited the emulation of Thucydides, and to have prompted him to write the hiftory of the Peloponnefian war. The favourable fentiments of his countrymen have been confirmed by the beft judges of the Roman eloquence. Cicero calls him the father of hiftory, and highly applauds the fweetnefs and harmony of his ftyle. Quinctilian concurs with Cicero, and fcruples not to contraft his merit with the eminent accomplifhments of Thucydides.

Thucydides is the great pillar of the hiftorical character of Greece. He was a man of fuperior intelligence and penetration, and he had been at much pains to procure very ample information of the tranfactions of which he writes. His fubject is the greateft the hiftory of Greece affords; and his political fagacity, though defective when meafured by a modern fcale, appears very confiderable when

compared with that of moſt other ancient hiſtorians. All his relations bear every mark of truth. Though he was an actor in the ſcenes he relates, yet no heſitation can be entertained about his impartiality, while his deſcriptions are highly pictureſque, and convey the moſt lively ideas to the reader. His ſtyle poſſeſſes great dignity and energy. His narrative is ſimple and perſpicuous, but in his ſpeeches he aſſumes a higher and more oratorial tone; he is figurative, rapid, and vehement.

He attains not, however, the merit of a perfect hiſtorian. The arrangement of his incidents adheres too ſervilely to a minute diviſion of his time into periods of half-years, which minces them into pieces, and ſcarcely permits one complete object to be preſented to the reader. He ſeparates his political and moral obſervations from his narrative, by reſerving them for his ſpeeches, which renders the narrative jejune and unintereſting, and the ſpeeches ſometimes obſcure. His affectation of auſterity, alſo, is too great, perhaps, even for an hiſtorian. He reminds his reader in every page how much he undervalues the ſmooth, terſe, and fluent compoſition of the rhetorician, by the involution and the length of his periods, and by the harſhneſs of his compounded words. I ſhall finiſh this character with the ſtriking contraſt which Quinctilian inſtitutes between him and Herodotus.

"Densus, et brevis, et semper instans sibi Thucydides; dulcis, et candidus, et fusus Herodotus; ille concitatis, hic remissis affectibus melior; ille concionibus, hic sermonibus; ille vi, hic voluptate. Historiam multi scripsere præclari, sed nemo dubitat hosce duos cæteris præferendos; quorum diversa virtus, laudem pene est parem consecuta."

LECTURE XLIII.

HISTORY—GREEK—ROMAN—ITALIAN—FRENCH.

THUCYDIDES unfortunately did not finiſh the Hiſtory of the Peloponneſian war, he extended it only to the middle of the twenty-firſt year. Xenophon undertook to complete that of the remaining ſix years, with a continuation to the victory of Epaminondas over the Spartans. Notwithſtanding his engagement in public buſineſs, and the avocations of a military life, he found means to allot a conſiderable part of his time to philoſophy and literature, and he diſplayed his eminence in both by ſeveral productions. I have already mentioned him as a philoſopher, and am now to conſider him as a hiſtorian. The works of this character are the Inſtitution of Cyrus, the Expedition of the Ten Thouſand Greeks whom he conducted into Aſia, to ſup-

port the pretenſions of Cyrus againſt his brother Artaxerxes, and the Hiſtory of Greece, being a continuation of the Hiſtory of Thucydides.

The Inſtitution of Cyrus is conſidered by Cicero* as a political romance, rather than a true narrative, as intended to delineate the culture moſt proper to form a good king, or a conſummate general, rather than to relate the circumſtances of the particular education of Cyrus. It ſeems, however, to have been either the cauſe or the effect of the author's intimacy with the Court of Perſia, and he has finiſhed it with a delicacy and propriety which have ſecured him the applauſe of every reader. It is amazing how much intereſt he has found means to inſinuate into a ſubject naturally ſo unimportant and unpromiſing, the education and the diverſions of a boy. But Xenophon was a man of the world, was well acquainted with human life in different ſituations, and he has been ſucceſsful in interweaving beautiful pictures of it, which will always pleaſe. The work is the manifeſt offspring of a lively imagination, much ſenſibility, and a correct taſte.

Meritorious, however, in a high degree as his ſtyle and manner are, it muſt be allowed, they are deſtitute of dignity to do juſtice to hiſtorical compoſition. They ſhine with luſtre in moral and political inquiries, and appear with perfect propriety

* Lib. ii. De Oratore.

in memoir-writing, but they ſink under the weight of hiſtory. I make this remark here, becauſe it will account for the opinion I am to offer concerning his two remaining works, the Anabaſis, and the Hiſtory of Greece. It accounts alſo for the opinion of Dionyſius of Halicarnaſſus, when he ſays that his ſtyle is pleaſant, but not beautiful. By pleaſant this author means ſweet, ſimple, and ſparingly ornamented, which I have obſerved are characteriſtics of the manner of Xenophon. By beautiful he underſtands the moſt perfect ſpecies of proſe compoſition, particularly the grave and dignified ſtyle of hiſtory.

The march of the ten thouſand Greeks is one of the moſt ſingular expeditions of which we have any record, and does much honour to the military capacity of the author, though he was not elevated to the command till they began to return home, after the death of Cyrus. It communicates a high idea of the diſcipline of the Greeks, and of the weakneſs and irregularity of the Aſiatic troops, that ſuch a handful of men ſhould penetrate ſo far through an enemy's country, haraſſed and purſued by all the force which the powerful monarch of Perſia could bring againſt them. We behold the apprehenſions of the Greeks for their ſafety, and the careful precautions they employed to ſecure it. We ſee the difficulties they had to encounter from the nature of the country through which they

marched, and the efforts made by the enemy at one time to cut off their retreat, at another to intercept their provifions. We obferve the natural and eager difpofitions of the Greeks not to return home without fome compenfation for fuch uncommon danger and fatigue. They attempt to plunder the Grecian colonies on the borders of the Euxine Sea, and they enter into the fervice of a King of Thrace.

Of all thefe fingular tranfactions, Xenophon has formed a moft pleafant memoir. He never digreffes from his fubject; he never affects to fhine by falfe brilliancy of ftyle. He feems to aim at nothing but to communicate his thoughts in the moft fimple, plain, and familiar manner, and to fubject his reader to as little inconvenience as poffible. In this fpecies of hiftorical compofition, only a little elevated above that of the Inftitution of Cyrus, the manner of Xenophon appears with grace and perfect propriety. The republic of letters has no fimilar productions of fuperior merit to exhibit.

It had been fortunate, perhaps, for the literary fame of Xenophon, had he never undertaken the continuation of the hiftory of Thucydides. He writes the Hiftory of Greece in the fame fimple eafy ftyle in which he compofed the Inftitution of Cyrus, and the Anabafis. Hiftory required a large portion of the meritorious qualities of thefe works, but it demanded fomething more. It demanded that the ftyle fhould have been elevated according

to the ſuperior dignity of the ſubject, and that the grave and inſtructive hiſtorian ſhould have been diſtinguiſhed, by his manner as well as by his matter, above the agreeable but familiar memoir-writer. He diſappoints the reader in another view. He is as deſtitute of political reflection as any other ancient hiſtorian, though he was a profeſſed political writer, and had compoſed treatiſes both on the governments of Sparta and Athens.

Polybius is the firſt hiſtorian of the Roman affairs who has deſcended to modern times. He lived in Rome, and wrote her hiſtory in Greek at a time when ſhe poſſeſſed no native qualified for that arduous taſk. He flouriſhed in the latter part of the ſixth century of the republic, about a hundred years before the death of Julius Cæſar. The Achæan league, which comprehended all the ſtates of Peloponneſus, was then the only power in Greece that could excite commotion, or create oppoſition to the Roman arms; and to prevent any diſturbance which might be ſuppoſed to ariſe in this quarter, the Romans ordered a thouſand of the chief citizens of Peloponneſus to be brought to Rome as hoſtages for the peaceable behaviour of their countrymen, and to be diſtributed among the principal cities of Italy. Polybius, a native of Megalopolis in Arcadia, was one of that thouſand, and he had not been long in Rome, before his eminent parts commended him to the favour of the firſt men of the city, particu-

larly to the family of the Scipio's. He contracted an intimate connection with Scipio Africanus. He attended him as his companion and his friend, and he instructed him in all the philofophical and military knowledge of Greece.

This connection, on the other hand, put Polybius in poffeffion of the greater part of the materials which he wanted for compofing his hiftory. It procured him all the information Rome could afford; and when Africanus was invefted with the command of the Roman armies in the laft Punic war, he attended that general in Africa. He carefully examined the country through which the armies marched, and at intervals he was furnifhed with the ufe of a galley, in order to vifit thofe coafts of the Mediterranean Sea which he had not formerly feen. To extend his knowledge ftill farther, he undertook peregrinations through Spain, Gaul, and the Alps *.

He feems to have been deeply ftruck with the grandeur of the Romans, the magnanimity of their patriots and heroes, the wifdom of their counfels, and the valour of their troops. He thought that the progrefs of their arms was the moft magnificent object the world had ever beheld, and that their great fuccefs could not fail to follow their great merit. Thefe conceptions appear to have prompted

* Hift. lib. iii. c. 59. Voff. De Hift. Græc.

the compofition of his hiftory, the defign of which is to exhibit a picture of the progrefs of the Roman dominions, and of the wifdom of the means by which it had been attained.

The hiftory comprehends a period of fifty-three years, from the beginning of the fecond Punic war to the end of the third, when Carthage was demolifhed, and the Carthaginian empire was fubverted. He divided it into thirty-eight books, befides two introductory ones, containing a furvey of the Roman affairs, from the time they firft attempted to extend their arms beyond the confines of Italy, to the beginning of the fecond Punic war. Unfortunately, however, the whole of this valuable performance is loft, except the firft fix books, and fome fragments of the reft.

As Polybius was a native of Pelopennefus, he probably poffeffed not naturally the purity of tafte by which the Athenians were diftinguifhed. He lived, alfo, fome time pofterior to the golden period of the Greek literature; and for thefe reafons there is, perhaps, fome foundation for the fevere judgement which Dionyfius of Halicarnaffus pronounces upon his ftyle, namely, that no reader of tafte can preferve patience to read him to an end *. But all readers who prefer fenfe to found, will not be much moved with the fentiments of this critic, efpecially

* Περι Συνθεσεως.

when they difcover fo much ufeful knowledge in what remains of the hiftory; and find Cicero and Livy of a fimilar opinion as to the whole of the work.

Polybius poffeffes not defcriptive powers equal to thofe of Thucydides or Livy, but he difcovers more enlarged views, and more political knowledge. He has interwoven more political information in his narrative than any other ancient hiftorian. He is abundantly prone to fpeculate and to reafon, and he frequently conjoins caufes with their effects. He is attentive alfo to explain negociations and treaties, and he even defcends fometimes to confider the interefts and regulations of commerce. He occafionally fteps afide from the courfe of his narrative to introduce difcuffions concerning war, government, and policy. He explains the genius of the Greeks and Romans for thefe very different arts, and he undertakes inquiries into the merits of their refpective civil conftitutions. We are particularly obliged to him for the information he communicates concerning that wonderful naval and commercial people the Carthaginians, who feem to have been animated with a larger portion of the fpirit of modern times, in refpect of ufeful arts and navigation, than any other ancient nation. In a word, the idea Polybius has formed of hiftory is furprifingly correct, and he feems to have wanted

only the ſuperior information and experience of later times to have rendered it complete. If his ſtyle be unpoliſhed, if his diſcuſſions be too long, or too frequent, or too ſuperficial *, the time at which he wrote forms an apology, if not an excuſe. We cannot help regretting that Livy, who had before him ſuch an example of the happy effects reſulting from the union of politics and hiſtory, did not condeſcend more to imitate it. But Livy, perhaps, preferred the example of Thucydides and Herodotus to that of Polybius.

Cæſar is the next Roman hiſtorian of whom I have not hitherto taken notice, and his merit is ſo great as to entitle him to particular attention. He was, like Xenophon, both a hero and a writer; and the Commentaries of the former, like the Anabaſis of the latter, are rather a memoir than a hiſtory. His fame as a memoir-writer is ſuperior to that of every other author except Xenophon, and it is doubtful which of them deſerves to be preferred. Nothing can be more perſpicuous, ſimple, and natural, than his Commentaries. He attains not, however, the dignity of hiſtory; and what he has written appears rather as the ſkeleton, than the body of ſuch a work.

In general he details his facts without much reflection. He ſeldom intermixes a political or a characteriſtic remark, though there were many op-

* Lib. iii. c. 81.

portunities for both in defcribing fuch fingular people as the Gauls and Germans.

Cæfar's ruling paffion was ambition; he was not, it would feem, very much concerned about his fame as a man of letters. He probably intended this fimple narrative for the gratification of the citizens of Rome, whom he had already perfuaded to favour his views; and if this was his intention, he could fcarcely be unfuccefsful. His ftyle is of that fort which gains the approbation of every reader. The moft illiterate underftand it, and the moft polifhed are pleafed with it, though it reaches not their notions of perfection.

The hiftory of Livy has to exhibit a feries of events of the moft important and interefting nature. The fituation in which he was placed rendered the fources of his information accurate and extenfive. His integrity, induftry, learning, tafte, and experience, were highly eminent. He is, however, rather deficient in two of the great qualifications of an hiftorian, political difcernment, and the art of abridging or extending his narrative, according to the importance of his matter. We difcover in his work very little of that generalizing fpirit which forms a fyftem of human affairs, and difplays the characters of men, and the caufes of events, as the foundations of that fyftem. He very feldom attempts to fpeculate, or even to offer a po-

litical remark; and he is at little pains to deduce the revolutions of Rome, from the nature of the government, and the circumſtances of the times. If we except ſome compliments offered to the magnanimity, to the political and military merit of his countrymen, he is ſeldom better than a bare relater of facts, who leaves his reader to make the proper reflections.

He ſeems to have thought it his duty to diſcuſs with equal copiouſneſs the events of every year, whether they deſerve ſo much notice or not, and to have been of opinion, if the ſtory was not equally intereſting, that the cenſure ſhould fall upon the materials, not upon the author. In the hiſtory of the ſecond Punic war, and of the tranſactions of Camillus againſt the Gauls, ſuch a detail appears with entire propriety, becauſe the dignity of the matter is ſufficient to juſtify it; but in the intervals of peace, which preſent few occurrences but the ordinary courſe of actions and prodigies, the moſt patient reader will ſometimes feel his attention exhauſted. It is much to be regretted, that three fourth parts of the books of Livy are loſt, and theſe including the moſt intereſting portion of the Roman tranſactions, the revolutions and convulſions of the laſt century of the republic. But if the author finiſhed with the ſame copiouſneſs the books that have periſhed with thoſe that remain, his work muſt

have furnished one of the largest productions of taste that ever appeared in the world.

Every part of the performance affords proof of his judgement and taste. The incidents are arranged in the most regular and lucid order, and he never indulges in unnecessary digressions or superfluous illustrations. His style is admirably adapted, both to the general nature of the composition, and the particular circumstances of the incidents. It possesses great perspicuity, dignity, ornament, and melody. It is a happy exhibition of energy without obscurity, of elevation without pomp or affectation, of embellishment without glitter. His orations are numerous, and uncommonly eloquent, happily fitted to the occasion and the character of the speaker. His descriptions present a judicious selection of circumstances, delineated in the most striking manner. In a word, in all the merits of composition, he has been seldom equalled, scarcely surpassed, by any historian, ancient or modern. His periods, however, are on some occasions involved, and extended to too great length; but these defects may, perhaps, be in part attributed to the corruption of transcribers, or the inaccurate punctuation of editors.

Tacitus is the most profound, though not the most elegant, of all the ancient historians. Like a man of true genius, every thing about him is cha-

racteristic. His narrative comprehends a period of near a hundred years, from the death of Augustus to the accession of Nerva, which he divides into annals and history, between which there seems to be very little difference, either as to composition, manner, or arrangement. In both he displays the same powers, and writes with the same dignity. He excels all historians in strength of understanding, vigour of imagination, and nervousness of style. Had he not been more sparing of his political than of his moral remarks; had he not sometimes degenerated into obscurity, from a desire too much to compress his meaning; and had he not, from the same cause, diminished the harmony of his periods, by the brevity, or rather abruptness with which they are frequently constructed, he would have furnished a model of historical composition which would have been admired as the most perfect, perhaps, that had ever appeared.

The Italians preceded the rest of Europe in arts, and in works of taste. They also led the way in historical composition. Their men of letters bear some resemblance to their remote ancestors, the ancient Romans; they are penetrating and ingenious, and are well qualified to shine in writing history. Guicciardin, Machiavel, and Davila, are entitled to much praise, and possess many qualifications of good historians. They discover much anxiety to obtain complete information, great candour in their

ſearch after truth, and much impartiality in relating it. Their political ſagacity is highly conſpicuous; and they interweave their reflections in their narrative with much propriety and ſucceſs. Guicciardin and Machiavel have choſen ſubjects connected with their native country; Davila reſided in France during the civil wars of Henry the Fourth, one of the moſt diſtracted periods of modern times, and he has formed of them a relation equally intereſting and inſtructive. They are, however, ſometimes too much inclined to ſpeculate, and their meaning is occaſionally rendered obſcure by long and ill-conſtructed periods.

The French, with all their national animation and induſtry, can ſcarcely be ſaid to have reached the higheſt eminence in hiſtorical compoſition. Their hiſtorians either diſplay too much vivacity and ornament, or they are plodding, dull compilators. They have not, perhaps, in any inſtance completely conjoined induſtry with diſcernment, penetration with ſpirit, dignity with decent ornament, and political ſagacity with candour.

Thuanus is a voluminous and induſtrious author, but his Hiſtory of his own Times is rather a quarry of materials for an elegant compoſition, than a work which the reader can peruſe with much pleaſure. Rapin's Hiſtory of England deſerves no better character, and could not have ſupported its reputation

ſo long, had not England been deficient of hiſtorical merit. It is now ſinking faſt into oblivion, and it will ſcarcely have the merit even of being conſidered as an authentic record; for, though the candour of the author is unimpeached, yet his information cannot eaſily be ſuppoſed to have been very complete; and ſucceeding hiſtorians of this country have much outſhone him in the merits of compoſition.

Voltaire is a ſingular genius in hiſtory. He has dreſſed her out like a gay, modiſh, modern perſonage, but has ſtripped her of all the dignity and gravity which have been generally conſidered as part of her character. She is all charms and pleaſantry, and avoids even the appearance of ſtudy and reflection. He has given her the air of romance more than any other author. His narrative is lively, picturesque, and witty, while his reflections ſavour more of the man of pleaſure, than of the ſerious hiſtorian. Much of the ground over which he muſt have travelled, if he was properly informed with regard to the materials of his general hiſtory, was thorny and rough; but from his performance, ſo genteel and ſprightly, he appears to be too fine a gentleman to touch, far leſs to read, the muſty volumes he ought to have ranſacked. He ſeems even afraid of the pedantic appearance of placing their titles on his margin; and while there are ſo many cauſes of ſuſpicion againſt him, he conde-

fcends not to fupport his narrative by a fingle credential. The confequence natural to fuch conduct has taken place, and the credibility of his information has, I believe, incurred fufpicion all over Europe. It has taken fuch firm hold of the minds of men, that it has not been removed by the authority of a writer on whofe judgement and integrity the public is much difpofed to rely. The readers of Dr Robertfon feem to have confidered his teftimony in favour of the induftry and veracity of Voltaire, rather as a compliment to French literature, than as founded exactly in truth.

Voltaire is one of the moft fingular writers the world has ever feen. There is fcarcely a fpecies of reputable compofition in which he has not attempted to appear, and he has been fo fucceſsful in them all as to gain general applaufe. This effect, however, has, I fufpect, refulted from circumftances, more than from the real merit of his works. It has refulted from the vivacity of his manner, and the ambiguity of his fentiments. By the former he has amufed all his readers; by the latter he has pleafed a great part of them. But real merit alone can gain and preferve immortality; occafional or incidental fources of reputation are often found quickly to ftagnate and evaporate.

Abbé Raynal is another fingular writer. He is the moft oratorial hiftorian, perhaps, the world ever faw, if a treatife, abounding with political,

commercial, hiſtorical, moral, and literary diſcuſſions, may deſerve the name of hiſtory. Never ſcarcely did there exiſt a book into which the author has contrived to introduce ſuch variety of ſubjects, and ſuch difference of information. His capital excellence, however, is the vigour of his imagination, and the eloquence of his compoſition, though many parts of his work were not a little hoſtile to the exertions of theſe qualities. It were fortunate if we could depend on his facts, as much as we are diſpoſed to admire his deſcriptions; but the multiplicity of difficult and intricate topics of which he treats, ſeems to render it impracticable for any man to procure an accurate knowledge of them all; and the ſuſpicions of the readers of this iſland will be increaſed ten-fold, when they diſcover his information to be defective with regard to their own affairs, of which ſurely he might have obtained more perfect intelligence, than of many others he pretends to write. He is equally unſupported with Voltaire by references to authorities. The reader muſt impoſe implicit faith in the writer; he cannot appeal from him to the originals.

LECTURE XLIV.

HISTORY—BRITISH—PASTORALS—THEOCRITUS—VIRGIL—POPE.

GREAT Britain had not, till a late period, produced any eminent hiſtorian. The convulſions about the power of the Crown, which diſtracted the country during the greater part of the ſeventeenth century, and the keen diſputes about the ſucceſſion which agitated it in the beginning of the laſt century, muſt be aſſigned as the chief cauſe of this phænomenon.

Theſe party-contentions, which involved all men qualified to write hiſtory, either perverted the judgement of the authors, or determined all men of candour to deſiſt from ſuch an undertaking, becauſe they could not expect readers. Before the beginning of the ſeventeenth century, our language,

perhaps, was not fufficiently polifhed to produce an eminent hiftorical work; and I fcarcely need to remark, that no author has obtained the higheft reputation by compofing in a foreign tongue.

The eminence of Buchanan would almoft tempt us to make him an exception to this rule. He wrote in the pureft age of the Latin language fince the reftoration of letters, and the merit of his ftyle is not, perhaps, furpaffed by that of any writer not of the pureft age of the Roman eloquence. His expreffion is claffical, his arrangement is melodious, his defcriptions are lively, and his narrative is diftinct. He has not been deficient in induftry, and his information as to facts feems to have been as authentic and complete as it was then poffible to make it. Towards the time of the latter part of his hiftory, the factions into which Scotland was divided were extremely violent, and he has incurred the accufation of being an apologift for the leaders who acted in oppofition to the Court. But, though there is, perhaps, fome ground for this accufation, yet he could not have avoided it, had he actually been lefs culpable than he is. He could not fatisfy both fides, though he might have pleafed neither, and he was fure to incur the reprehenfion of the fide which he did not defend.

I fhould be glad no heavier cenfure could be brought againft him, becaufe it affects only a fmall portion of his work, which may be read where fuf-

pected with ſome grains of allowance; but I am ſorry to remark, that his knowledge is not a little defective both of the antiquities and of the political ſyſtem of his country. He ſeems to have ſpent his whole time in ſtudying the claſſical authors of Greece and Rome, from whom he acquired that fine taſte and meritorious ſtyle which do him ſo much honour; but from them alſo he extracted many of the political principles which appear in his hiſtory. It is unneceſſary to obſerve how inadequate ſuch qualifications were to form a Britiſh hiſtorian. The antiquities and law of his country are derived more from the Germans, than from the Greeks and Romans; and the ſuperficial knowledge of Buchanan in the feudal law, which is interwoven with all the early hiſtory of this iſland, diminiſhes much the utility of his performance. Neither the tranſactions of our Parliaments, nor the operations of our armies, can be underſtood, without an acquaintance with this law; and the ſtudy of it in the time of Buchanan was ſcarcely known. But, though theſe circumſtances diminiſh the utility and authority of his hiſtory, they form an objection againſt the ſtudies of the age, rather than againſt the merit of the writer. He was ſcarcely to blame for not applying to legal inveſtigations to which almoſt nobody turned their attention. The utmoſt length, therefore, to which we can puſh the cenſure, reſpects the neglect of feudal principles and practices

daily paſſing before his eyes; and his inadvertency of the darkneſs in which many tranſactions and events he had to explain were involved, without the knowledge of this law.

Lord Clarendon poſſeſſed many qualities of an eminent hiſtorian. His information was extenſive, his diſcernment was great, and his political knowledge was very conſiderable. His elevated rank, his experience in buſineſs, his acquaintance with human nature, and with the characters, views, and intereſts of men, furniſhed him with many advantages which few authors of hiſtory inherit. He has been branded with partiality to the royal cauſe, but this cenſure he could not avoid. He certainly thought that law, equity, and reaſon were on its ſide, and that both his candour and his honour demanded of him to do it juſtice. He was a man of too much integrity wilfully to miſrepreſent either perſons or things; and if he leans to one party, we cannot doubt that he ſincerely judged it right. His whole merit, however, conſiſts in his matter. His manner has hardly any quality to recommend it. An occaſional nervous and dignified period ſometimes occurs, but his compoſition in general cannot deſerve much praiſe. His ſentences are often intolerably extended and involved; ſometimes they are almoſt unintelligible. He ſeems to have had little conception of the unity and preciſion of a period. He tacks ſentence to ſentence, and member

to member, till he fatigues, perplexes, and disgusts the reader. While he is thus negligent of perspicuity, the first ingredient of good composition, it is superfluous to inquire whether he attains other merits of less consequence, melody and ornament. The reader of Lord Clarendon must peruse him for the useful information he conveys, and must expect no other gratification or reward.

Bishop Burnet undertook the task of compiling a history of his own times, that is of a very interesting period, from the Restoration to the accession of the present royal family; and he has composed an amusing book, though he enjoyed not many talents of a great historian. He was a sincere, zealous, and honest man, but he was deficient in discernment, and was easily misled. He had not always access to the best information; he collected it occasionally in conversation, and he was too much swayed by popular opinion. This method of procuring intelligence obliges him continually to introduce himself as one link of the chain by which it is authenticated, a practice which has offended many of his readers, and has made them rashly impute to his vanity what was really the effect of his desire to give them satisfaction. His information, it must be allowed, passes through two mediums, neither of which might be altogether pure, first the relater, and then the historian. These circumstances give an equivocal air to a narrative, so that some of his

enemies have called his performance a Hiſtory of Hearſays. It muſt be confeſſed that ſuch documents ſavour little of the dignity and authenticity of a juſt hiſtorical compoſition, ſupported by records and original papers, yet it cannot be denied that his work is intereſting and inſtructive. It derives theſe merits chiefly from the ſimplicity and ſincerity with which the incidents are related, and the picturesque and particular manner in which the characters are delineated. Theſe qualities conſtitute its principal, if not its whole excellence. The integrity, and the deſcriptive powers of the author, permit us not to ſuſpect his underſtanding or his heart; becauſe he was ſatisfied, we incline alſo to be ſatisfied.

His ſtyle attains no qualities of hiſtory, except ſimplicity and perſpicuity. It has little dignity, no melody, no elegance. It is deſtitute ſometimes of preciſion, purity, and correctneſs, but the ſentences are never long nor involved, and the reader is not obliged to ſtop and to read twice in order to diſcover the ſenſe.

Hiſtory has of late become the favourite line of reading, and will probably continue to be ſo, as no other ſpecies of writing is ſo popular, ſo amuſing, and ſo inſtructive. It furniſhes matter for much ſagacious and pleaſant reflection on human nature, and the progreſs of ſociety. It always makes a reſpectable figure in converſation, and it is of the greateſt utility to the politician and to the moraliſt.

In an age of high civilization, when the chief exertions both of mind and body are directed towards the attainment of thoſe qualifications which are uſeful and ſhowy, rather than thoſe which are refined and profound, no diſpoſition could be more fortunate. It teaches wiſdom without affectation; it amuſes with innocence; it poliſhes and inſtructs with eaſe and expedition.

The popularity of ſome late hiſtorians, particularly Hume, Robertſon, and Gibbon, has contributed to excite, to propagate, and to preſerve this taſte. They have diſplayed all thoſe qualifications which the experience of ancient or modern times has found neceſſary to ſucceſs. Adorned with the moſt enlarged views of human nature and of ſociety; deeply ſkilled in the principles of politics, and their applications to government and laws; enlightened with general views of ſcience, and improved by an intimacy with the capital literary productions, ancient or modern; they have undertaken to write hiſtory with all the advantages which knowledge, taſte, genius, and example could beſtow. To theſe preliminary qualifications they have added all thoſe requiſite in the courſe of execution. They have diſplayed all the induſtry and candour which are neceſſary to inveſtigate truth, and to communicate it with fidelity; they have conceived a high idea of the purity, dignity, and elegance of hiſto-

rical compoſition; and they have entertained the moſt proper notion of the union of political knowledge with hiſtorical facts. They have preſented a charming ſeries of cauſes and effects; and they have practiſed the art of rendering every part of their narration intereſting, by condenſing or dilating it, according to the importance of the matter.

I am unwilling to attempt a more particular diſcuſſion of their merits, as the time is not yet arrived when that liberty can ſafely be indulged. Each, however, has his peculiar excellencies and defects; from which, perhaps, we might venture to predict their reception with poſterity, when theſe will be impartially weighed, without regard to novelty, connection, or any extraneous circumſtances that may at preſent influence the judgements of men. But on this field it would be improper now to enter. The critic might ſpeak truth, but he would be ſuſpected of partiality, malevolence, or envy. The time faſt approaches when every ſuſpicion of this ſort will ſubſide; and, till that time arrive, I leave them in the enjoyment of the reputation they poſſeſs, wiſhing they may retain it as long as our literature and language ſhall exiſt.

Before I leave the ſubject of hiſtorical compoſition, I muſt take notice of a remarkable difference in the manner of ancient and modern hiſtorians relative to ſpeeches.

The ancient hiſtorians commonly introduce the

principal perfonages to deliver their fentiments in formal orations; the moderns have been fatisfied with communicating the fubftance of thefe orations by way of narrative, referving the liberty of tranfcribing paffages from real fpeeches which prefent any thing ftriking either in fentiment or expreffion.

The partizans of the ancients contend, that this practice adds pleafant variety to the narration; that it furnifhes to the hiftorian an eminent opportunity of difplaying his oratorial powers; and that modern hiftorians have difcontinued the practice, becaufe they were confcious of their incapacity to execute it with dignity and fuccefs. The friends of the modern manner maintain, that the practice is unnatural, becaufe the fpeeches are not genuine, but manifeftly fabricated by the hiftorian; that they lengthen the narrative intolerably, as every fpeaker, to make his narrative complete, muft recapitulate many particulars with which the reader is acquainted, and about which he is perfectly fatisfied; that the framing of them is fo far from being difficult, it is eafier, perhaps, than the compofing of a fuccinct and lively narrative of their fubftance; and that the practice of introducing parts of fpeeches, when real and remarkable, is not only allowable, but commendable.

I need not fpend time in canvaffing the merits of this difpute. The fpeeches of ancient hiftory,

though many of them are very beautiful, are certainly liable to ſome objections. The hiſtorian generally appears in every one of them; they include a number of ornamental circumſtances, which muſt be perfectly imaginary; and they ſeparate the ſpeculation unnaturally from the facts. They often diſguſt by their prolixity, and they become almoſt unavoidably obſcure.

I now proceed to treat of compoſitions in verſe.

Verſe and proſe are words which, it is ſuppoſed, every one underſtands; but, when we begin to ſcrutinize them, we diſcover that the diſtinction between them is not altogether obvious. Does it conſiſt in the thoughts, or in the words? Not in the thoughts, for we can communicate no thoughts in verſe which may not be expreſſed with entire propriety in proſe. All the ornaments of which poetry is ſuſceptible, whether addreſſed to the imagination or to the paſſions, may alſo be introduced into proſe. Odes, dramatic and epic compoſitions, may appear, and have appeared, with ſucceſs in proſe as well as in verſe. It ſeems, then, the diſtinction muſt conſiſt altogether in the words. Does it lie in uſing different words? No, for both kinds generally employ the ſame words. It muſt depend, then, on the arrangement and melody of the words; and this is the circumſtance which decides the difference. Verſe is an artificial modulation of the lines of the compoſition, ſo as to form a peculiar muſical ca-

dence, more agreeable to the ear than any melody which can be introduced into a period of profe. A compofer in profe has no guide but his ear; a poet has the rules of modulation determined by art. Verfe appears more difficult than profe, becaufe the melody of profe is at beft but of an inferior kind. The mufical merit of verfe is more delicate and refined, and is the higheft effort of art, to add to the thoughts all the pleafure arifing from found.

The ancient method of meafuring verfes by feet, was a contrivance merely mechanical, to determine their legitimacy, not to promote or fecure their melody. They might be accurate as to meafurement, and might be, notwithftanding, very unmufical. The harmony of verfe, as well as of profe, muft depend in a great meafure on the ear of the author. The ancient hexameter poffeffes a magnificence to which no modern verfification can afpire. But if blank verfe be lefs fonorous and mufical, it compenfates that defect by a variety of cadence and melody which the uniformity of the hexameter cannot admit.

Rhyme is the invention of the barbarity of the middle ages, and is ftill retained by all the polifhed nations of Europe. It is of great fervice to bad poets, for it conceals many imperfections both in thought and expreffion. But it is a diminutive ornament in the higher kinds of compofition, and has

for that reafon been difcontinued by almoft all Englifh, epic, dramatic, and defcriptive poets. In gay and fprightly works, however, it is not without fome merit; it adds a degree of furprife to the fentiment, by the ingenuity difplayed in the choice of the rhymes. It renders the compofition more nice and curious, which augments its praife with many readers; and it communicates a brifk and lively air to the words, by difclofing unexpected refemblances in their founds. In treating of compofitions in verfe, I fhall begin with Paftorals.

The object of paftoral poetry is to delight the imagination with defcriptions of the beauties of nature, and of human life fpent in the midft of thefe beauties, the perfons poffeffing health, fenfibility, and innocence, and undifturbed by the anxieties and cares of bufinefs and activity. The fimple recapitulation of the principal objects of which fuch defcriptions confift, communicates pleafing and exhilirating emotions. Zephyrs whifpering through the trees and woods; rivulets gliding along their moffy banks; birds chaunting their lively notes; fhepherds playing on their rural pipes; lambkins fkipping after their dams; and the fhepherdeffes liftening to the enchanting lays of their amorous fwains.

The furvey of pictures of innocence and happinefs cannot fail to be agreeable, if the reader can be convinced of their reality. But, as he finds fuch defcriptions continually falfified by experience, the

poet artfully lays the ſcenes of his paſtorals in remote places and ages, when, it is ſuppoſed, human life was leſs corrupted, and when ſhepherds and ſhepherdeſſes retained more refined ſentiments, and more elevated rank, than perſons of that character in modern times. If we wiſh to ſurvey rural felicity in perfection, we muſt ſuppoſe ourſelves tranſplanted into Sicily or Arcadia, where the paſtoral life appeared in perfection, and where nature laviſhed all her ſtores to render the ſhepherd happy.

It is not ſufficient, however, that the face of nature be lively and gay, the picture to intereſt muſt be animated with ſentiment. The ſhepherd muſt diſcover anxiety to obtain ſome object of importance to his happineſs, or he muſt ſolace himſelf with the poſſeſſion of it. He may ſignify his regret for the abſence of a miſtreſs or a friend; he may indulge in the hope to recover their ſociety; he may ſympathiſe with their misfortunes, or he may rejoice at their proſperity. But no violent feeling muſt be excited; no deep diſtreſs, or pungent ſorrow muſt appear, which would produce vexation in the mind of the reader, becauſe ſuch a feeling would interfere with the gaiety and pleaſant emotions naturally prompted by this kind of compoſition.

Attention alſo muſt be beſtowed to preſerve the paſtoral character both in ſentiment and in action.

The ſhepherds muſt not appear too learned or refined in their notions, neither muſt they diſplay rudeneſs, cruelty, or indecency in their manners or words. Good ſenſe, ſenſibility, obſervation of the ſtriking beauties of nature, conjoined with ſimplicity and innocence, are the qualifications they muſt chiefly diſplay.

A ſimilar regard muſt be paid to local character, and national circumſtances. The Britiſh ſwain muſt not offer ſacrifice to Pan, nor defend his flock againſt the lion and the wolf; he may, however, believe in the exiſtence of inviſible ſpirits or incantations, or fortify his lambs againſt the hound and the fox. In a word, the paſtoral poet may indulge in every ſuppoſition which may render his pictures more beautiful, intereſting, or ſentimental, but he muſt not puſh his demands too far, nor ſhock the faith of his reader; he muſt not aſk him to believe what is inconſiſtent or incredible.

Theocritus is the moſt early writer of paſtorals whoſe works have deſcended to poſterity, and he has been imitated by all his ſucceſſors, particularly by Virgil. He was an inhabitant of Syracuſe in Sicily, about the time of Alexander the Great, and he has laid the ſcenes of all his poems in that delightful iſland. He paints nature, and delineates the ſentiments and actions of his ſhepherds with great addreſs. No paſtoral writer has been more happy in ſtriking the due medium between refine-

ment and rudeneſs; and the uſe he makes of the Doric dialect, ſo admirably ſuited to the ruſticity and ſimplicity of his characters, is none of the leaſt marks of his merit.

His poems are unequal in their merits, but all of them contain many beautiful and natural pictures of the paſtoral life and rural manners. He is ſometimes accuſed of indelicacy, and there ſeems to be ſome foundation for the cenſure. It is, however, not improbable, that his ideas of the paſtoral character were not ſo refined as thoſe of ſome of his ſucceſſors, and that he perhaps conſidered as characteriſtic or pictureſque, what they reprehend as defective or deformed.

Virgil ſucceeds Theocritus both in time and merit. Several of his paſtorals are finiſhed with great good taſte, ſimplicity, and propriety. No writer excels him in painting delicate ſentiment, for which this kind of compoſition affords frequent opportunity. Nothing can be more ſimple and natural than the following lines.

> "Tityre, dum redeo, brevis eſt via, paſce capellas:
> Et potum paſtas age, Tityre; et inter agendum
> Occurſare capro, cornu ferit ille, caveto."

Again,

> "Hic gelidi fontes: hic mollia prata, Lycori:
> Hic nemus: hic ipſo tecum conſumerer ævo."

"Parta meæ Veneri sunt munera; namque notavi
Ipse locum, aeriæ quo congessere palumbes."

The two last lines are beautifully translated and improved by Shenstone.

"I have found out a gift for my fair,
I have found where the wood-pigeons breed;
But let me the plunder forbear,
She will say 'twas a barbarous deed."

Of ten eclogues, however, which Virgil has left, not above the half can properly be said to deserve the name of pastoral. Several of them, particularly the first and ninth, have little of that character. They are allegories which relate to the private situation of the author, and the losses he had sustained in his patrimony during the civil wars. He artfully and prudently wrote these poems to explain his situation to Augustus, and they could not fail to gain the end he wished. Pollio and Silenus also have no relation to pastorals, and are written in a strain very much above them. The third, fifth, seventh, and eighth only can be said to belong strictly to this species of poetry; and though even in them the sentiments are sometimes too refined, yet they are never quaint or affected. The reader more easily pardons deviations, because, if the dialogue on any occasion

is not perfectly paſtoral, it is always ſomething better.

Pope has imitated and almoſt tranſlated Theocritus and Virgil. His paſtorals, accordingly, have little merit but that of the verſification, which is perhaps the moſt ſmooth and melodious in the Engliſh language. He has ſcarcely ventured to advance a ſingle ſentiment of which he had not received a hint from the Sicilian or Roman poet. Nor has he always improved what he had borrowed; he ſometimes indulges in quaintneſs and affectation, even when he copies theſe writers, and where they are perfectly chaſte and natural. The ſubſequent quotations will illuſtrate this remark. Virgil, with much ſimplicity, expreſſes a beautiful ſentiment in the following lines.

> "Malo me Galatea petit, laſciva puella,
> Et fugit ad ſalices, et ſe cupit ante videri."

Pope diminiſhes the effect of this thought, by adding to it an air of prettineſs and conceit.

> "The ſprightly Sylvia trips along the green,
> She runs, but hopes ſhe does not run unſeen.
> While a kind glance at her purſuer flies,
> How much at variance are her feet and eyes!"

Pope wrote his paſtorals when very young, which furniſhes a good apology for their defects.

As they were probably his firſt attempt to procure fame, we are the leſs ſurpriſed that he held them in higher eſtimation than they perhaps deſerved. We perceive this partiality from the ironical criticiſm ſubjoined to the papers on Paſtorals publiſhed in the Guardian, where the preference is given to thoſe of Philips. Addiſon had written the former papers; Pope wrote the laſt, ſent it to the publiſher as from an unknown hand; and the deſign of it is to ridicule both the paſtorals of Philips, and the criticiſm of Addiſon. The irony is refined and well covered, and it ſeems Addiſon, at leaſt Steele the publiſher, according to Dr Johnſon in his Life of Addiſon, did not diſcover it. The incident, however, ſhows the anxiety of Pope, and that he was irritated by the remarks of Addiſon.

LECTURE XLV.

PASTORALS—LYRIC POETRY.

AMONG all the various poets, ancient or modern, who have attempted paſtorals, Shenſtone is entitled to great praiſe. Neither Theocritus nor Virgil are, perhaps, to be compared with him, in combining the capital requiſites of this kind of writing; for no author in this line has introduced with more ſucceſs whatever is ſimple, tender, and delicate. Even Shenſtone's own works in this line are not equally meritorious. He degenerates ſometimes into flatneſs and inſipidity; but no language can furniſh a performance of its kind ſuperior to his paſtoral ballad, in four parts, on Abſence, Hope, Solitude, and Diſappointment. No quaintneſs, no affectation, no falſe refinement, no indelicacy; all is nature, innocence, and elegance. The whole poem deſerves high praiſe: as a ſhort

ſpecimen, I ſhall preſent the following lines from the part denominated Hope.

"One would think ſhe might like to retire
To the bow'r I had labour'd to rear;
Not a ſhrub that I heard her admire,
But I haſted and planted it there.
Oh! how ſudden the jeſſamine ſtrove
With the lilac, to render it gay;
Already it calls for my love,
To prune the wild branches away.
I have found out a gift for my fair,
I have found where the wood-pigeons breed;
But let me the plunder forbear,
She will ſay 'twas a barbarous deed:
For he ne'er could be true, ſhe averr'd,
Who could rob a poor bird of its young;
And I lov'd her the more when I heard
Such tenderneſs fall from her tongue."

The favourable reception which paſtoral poetry has obtained from all poliſhed nations, and the picture it is ſuppoſed to exhibit of the happy, but fabulous times of the golden age, have prompted ſome eminent authors to attempt to improve it. They have retained the paſtoral characters, occupations, and manners, and to theſe have added importance and intereſt, by moulding them into a beautiful and picturesque ſentimental comedy. As a farther enhancement of its merit, they have made muſic contribute liberally to adorn it, and have introduced a

number of tender characteristic songs, in which the shepherds and shepherdesses signify to one another their hopes and wishes, accompanied with correspondent airs of melody. Few entertainments can present an assemblage of so many captivating objects, beautiful pictures of nature; the charms of music which touch the heart; characters pleased, chearful, and happy, engaged in those simple cares and attachments which occupy human life without fatiguing it, and which, being dictated by innocence and restrained by virtue, gently agitate without distracting the mind. Attempts of merit of this sort have accordingly been honoured with the warmest approbation.

Italy furnishes two eminent specimens, which all Europe has read and admired. The Amynta of Tasso and the Pastor Fido of Guarini. Both display vivid pictures of nature and of rural manners. The fables are interesting and happily conducted; the characters are thrown into many delicate and tender situations. Many of the scenes are beautiful, are wrought up with much sensibility, and the reader receives a very exquisite amusement. The merit, however, of these writers is not nearly equal; though both have indulged in too much refinement. Tasso's performance would have been perfect, had not his shepherds and shepherdesses been too polished. But their sentiments are often so polite and elevated, that they lose probability. The reader

can ſcarcely believe that he contemplates the opinions and actions of people who have any concern with such rude employments, as the care of flocks and herds; he is tempted to conclude that the ſcene is imaginary, and that he ſurveys the manners of courtiers in the diſguiſe of peaſants.

Faulty, however, as Taſſo is in reſpect of refinement, Guarini is much more reprehenſible. His ſhepherds and ſhepherdeſſes reaſon and converſe, not like courtiers, but philoſophers. A metaphyſical inveſtigation does not often require ſo much ſevere attention to underſtand it, as the dialogue of his ruſtics. He degenerates frequently into forced conceits, ſtudied ornaments, and unnatural flights of fancy. When he means to be fine and delicate, he is affected and quaint; when he wiſhes to be tender, he is formal and ſtudied; when he ſhould utter the language of ſentiment and paſſion, he is cool and declamatory. Even his diſpaſſionate ſcenes are ſo laboured, inverted, and elevated, that the reader wonders at the time and pains they muſt have exhauſted. It is to be regretted, that the taſte of this author was ſo incorrect, for his genius has conſiderable merit. The fable and characters are neither ill-imagined nor indiſtinctly marked; and the muſic of his verſification ſeems to be charming.

I will not heſitate to rank with the performances of theſe authors, meritorious as they are, a paſtoral

comedy of Scotland, to the merit of which every reader has borne ample teſtimony; I mean, the Gentle Shepherd of Allan Ramſay. The author has exerted much pains to avoid the reprehenſible qualities of his two rivals, and every candid critic muſt allow that he has been ſucceſsful. That he might ſuggeſt an apology for the greater liberality of ſentiment which he has ventured to throw into the characters of his principal ſhepherd and ſhepherdeſs, he has ſuppoſed them to inherit a genius ſuperior to their ſtation, communicated from their parents, who poſſeſſed a more elevated rank, but who, from political misfortunes, were obliged to permit their children to be educated in concealment and obſcurity.

In every other view his paſtoral is entitled to much praiſe. The fable is well conceived, naturally and regularly conducted. The characters are diſtinctly marked; they are numerous, and properly varied. Their occupations, ſentiments, manners, are all the moſt pictureſque, local, and characteriſtic that can be ſuppoſed. Simplicity, innocence, chearfulneſs, ruſtic ſports and merriment, rude prejudices, opinions, and fears, are beautifully and pertinently interſperſed. The ſituations of the principal characters are delicate and intereſting, and deeply engage the attention of the reader. The great change of fortune, and the conſequent happi-

nefs they enjoy from the accidental difcovery of their birth and opulence in the courfe of the action, terminate the performance by fuggefting the moft pleafing and fatisfactory frame of mind the reader could wifh to poffefs. The mufic is national, tender, fimple, and the diction is perfectly fuited to the characters. It is finifhed in the true Doric tafte, foft and expreffive, neither too refined, nor too grofs and unpolifhed. It is unfortunate that this performance has not the advantage of the two Italian poems, to be generally read and underftood. It can fcarcely be underftood by any reader not a native of Scotland; and language and manners change fo rapidly, that the time perhaps is not very diftant, when it will not be intelligible even in its native country. Thus the locality of its manners and language, which conftitute the chief ingredients of its merit, diminifh its intereft, and circumfcribe its reputation. Had its manners been general, its language pure, and its fcene Arcadia, it would have had lefs characteriftic beauty, but it might have inherited the applaufe of Europe.

Lyric poetry, to which I now proceed, included in ancient times every poetical compofition accompanied with mufic, whether of the voice or of inftruments. It was called Lyric from the lyre with which it was commonly attended, and it acquired the name of Ode, becaufe it was alfo defigned to be fung. It is a fhort, occafional, animated effort of

genius. The author may aſſume any tone he chuſes; he may be ſublime, familiar, gay, ſerious, paſſionate, moral, tender, or witty, with equal propriety, and he may even intermix ſeveral of theſe ſtrains in the ſame poems. Panegyric, however, is the principal field it has occupied in all ages, for the praiſes of the gods and of heroes have furniſhed more odes than all other ſubjects put together. The Pſalms of David were lyric productions, and were ſung in the celebration of the Jewiſh worſhip. The Odes of Pindar were compoſed in the praiſe of the gods, or heroes, or victors in the games of Greece. Thoſe of Horace are dedicated to the honour of the gods, or they form elegant complimentary addreſſes to his country, to eminent individuals, or to friends. Modern times have not been ſo prolific in this ſpecies of compoſition as thoſe of antiquity; they are not, however, deſtitute of ſome very conſpicuous ſpecimens.

Lyric poetry is ſuſceptible of different ornaments, ſuitable to the nature of the ſubjects it treats. It admits ſometimes the boldeſt and warmeſt figures of imagination and paſſion; at other times it delights in the playful and pleaſant images of fancy and feeling. Sometimes the expreſſion is ardent, conciſe, and vehement; at other times it is ſimple and diffuſe; but at all times it muſt be pure, picturesque, and correct. The ſtyle ſhould be more finiſhed, perhaps,

than that of any other ſpecies of poetry, for the attention of the reader is neither powerfully nor long diverted by the ſentiment. He ſoon turns it toward the expreſſion; and he is ſo ſcrupulous, that he will not excuſe the ſlighteſt impropriety. The capital characteriſtics of the ode, then, are magnificence, or paſſion or ingenuity in the thought, and perfect elegance in the ſtyle.

Greece has left ſome conſpicuous monuments of lyric compoſition, in the odes of Pindar, Sappho, and Anacreon; the firſt remarkable for vehemence and ſublimity; the two laſt for ſenſibility, pleaſantry, and vivacity. Many of the productions of Pindar are loſt; fortunately his Pythia, Olympia, Nemæa, and Iſtmia, ſtill remain, which celebrate the praiſes of the victors in thoſe illuſtrious fields of fame. All ages have concurred in aſcribing to Pindar the higheſt ſtrains of lyric merit. Horace holds him forth as inimitable. Quinctilian aſſerts, that he excelled all lyric poets in the grandeur of his ſentiments, the propriety of his figures, and the happineſs of his expreſſion. Indeed the poems which remain abundantly ſupport the judgements pronounced by theſe diſtinguiſhed critics. All his conceptions have an air of elevation, and he riſes ſometimes to a pitch of vehemence and majeſty which nothing can ſurpaſs. Thunder and lightning appear to ſurround him; he confounds, aſtoniſhes, and overwhelms the reader. It muſt be confeſſed,

that in these awful moments he sometimes involves himself in clouds and darkness; the reader loses sight of his ideas, or struggles hard to grasp a phantom which escapes him. The figures are remote or obscure, and the arrangement becomes harsh and austere.

From the few specimens which remain of Sappho, we regret that time has not spared more of her productions, for no writer seems to surpass her in sensibility, and in the delicate ornaments of a rich imagination. Tenderness and elegance are the characteristics of her manner; her thoughts and expression are the genuine offspring of sympathy and taste. The Greek language is not perhaps so familiar as to render agreeable a quotation in her own words; you will more easily understand a beautiful translation of one of her odes by Catullus, which paints the power of love.

"Ille mi par esse deo videtur,
Ille, si fas est, superare divos,
Qui sedens adversus, indentidem te
Spectat et audit,
Dulce ridentem; misero quod omnis
Eripit sensus mihi; nam simul te
Lesbia, adspexi, nihil est super me,
Quod loquar amens.
Lingua sed torpet, tenuis sub artus
Flamma dimanat; sonitu suopte

Tinniunt aures; gemina teguntur
Lumina nocte."

Anacreon excels in all the eafe, fimplicity, and vivacity of which the ode is fufceptible. His pictures indeed difplay fometimes an air of levity and trifling, but they are genuine paintings of nature, and of the feelings of the human heart. The reader can fcarcely furvey a more entertaining object than the figure he exhibits of himfelf, pleafant, contented, and happy, archly diverting himfelf with fportive portraits of the whimfical and rifible effects which the paffion of love frequently produces between the fexes. He affords alfo many delicate examples of that pretty ingenuity in the turn of the thought, which makes fuch a graceful appearance in the ode. His expreffion is always fimple, fweet, and melodious.

Horace is the only Roman poet of the lyric tribe whofe works have defcended to modern times; and, it feems, we have little reafon to regret the lofs of the reft, for, if we may rely on the opinion of Quinctilian, Horace alone merited immortality. "Lyricorum Horatius fere folus legi dignus. Nam et infurgit aliquando, plenus eft jucunditatis et gratiæ; et variis figuris et verbis feliciffime audax." He has compofed in more variety of manner than any other lyric poet. He fometimes poffeffes a great deal of the fire and fublimity

of Pindar; at other times he rivals the ſenſibility and tenderneſs of Sappho; he frequently aſſumes the gaiety and familiarity of Anacreon; and in all theſe manners his execution is highly meritorious.

He poſſeſſed a ſound underſtanding, a correct taſte, and a vigorous imagination; he was, beſides, a philoſopher, a man of the world, and well acquainted with the operations and feelings of the human heart. No other Roman poet communicates ſo much knowledge of the characters of his countrymen. His epiſtles, particularly, teem with good ſenſe and ſagacious reflection. He does not ſhine, however, as a critic, farther than he ſeems to be guided by the general principles of judgement and taſte, without having carefully ſtudied the ſubject. It is difficult to find any ſyſtem in his art of poetry; it is even difficult ſometimes to diſcover his meaning; and his deciſions, perhaps, are not always founded in reaſon and juſtice. The ſame deſultory and irregular manner is occaſionally diſcernible in his ſatires. He ſtarts from his ſubject, and indulges in digreſſions. He could not be ignorant of this impropriety; he muſt have followed implicitly the bent of his genius at the time of compoſing, and his indolence would not permit him to make the neceſſary corrections.

From the ſame ſpirit of indolence, or from a notion, perhaps, that careleſs verſification was ſuitable

to the nature of a familiar letter, are derived thofe profaic lines which abound in his epiftles, and which feem hardly poetry, unlefs read in a manner which obfcures their meaning: fo inattentive has he been to place the emphafis on words of dignity, and to make the metrical paufes coincide with thofe of the fenfe. You can fcarcely open the epiftles without finding examples of fuch verfification.

But his merit as a poet is well fupported by his odes. Both his thoughts and his verfification are entitled to high praife. The thoughts are fprightly, ingenious, inftructive, and entertaining; nothing can be more graceful and melodious than his verfification. Whether his fubject be elevated, gay, familiar, or grave, the moft pertinent conceptions, and the happieft expreffions, feem entirely at his command. No affectation, no conceit, no ftrained figures, no harfh arrangements, no ambiguous phrafeology, difgrace his compofition. It is characterifed by fimplicity, energy, and elegance.

Amid fuch a tide of excellence, we remark with reluctance fome confiderable defect even in his fentiments, and we cannot eafily conceive that the fame genius fhould deferve fo much praife and cenfure for the fame work. He difcovers fometimes in his odes a licentioufnefs and indelicacy moft unworthy of his merit, which favour ftrongly either of caprice in his tafte, or of much relaxation in his principles of decency. His ideas are extremely exceptionable,

and they are wrapt in no diſguiſe which might conceal their deformity. They are diſplayed in full view, and ſhock every reader of delicacy and ſenſibility.

No modern poets have compoſed volumes of odes like Pindar and Horace, but many of them have occaſionally attempted this ſpecies of compoſition. The chief of theſe in Engliſh are Dryden, Pope, Addiſon, Gray, and Akenſide. The three firſt are diſtinguiſhed by their odes to St Cecilia, in praiſe of the powers of muſic; the ſubjects of the two laſt are miſcellaneous. As the three firſt have attempted ſucceſſively to adorn the ſame theme, it affords a good opportunity of comparing their merits.

Alexander's Feaſt, Dryden's ode, has gained univerſal fame, and it ſeems to deſerve all the reputation it has attained. It is difficult to decide whether the ſentiments or the compoſition merit more praiſe. The ſentiments are admirably ſuited to the perſonages whom they deſcribe, and the compoſition is fitted with equal propriety to the ſentiments. The ſentiments are artfully contraſted, which, added to their natural excellence, diſplays them in the moſt captivating light. A train of grand and ſublime thoughts is ſucceeded by a ſeries of gay and pleaſant ones; a ſet of outrageous and furious conceptions, is contraſted with a group of gentle and tender ones. The poet ſhakes the

ſpheres with Jupiter, revels with Bacchus, raves and deſtroys with the Furies, and drops a tear with his hero over the misfortunes of Darius.

In deſcribing the deſcent of Jupiter to Olympia, and the ambition of the hero to imitate the god, he employs the dignity of Iambic meaſure, ſuited to the grandeur of the ſubject, and nothing can be more ſimple and majeſtic than the expreſſion.

> "The liſtening crowd admire the lofty ſound,
> A preſent deity! they ſhout around;
> A preſent deity! the vaulted roofs rebound.
> With raviſh'd ears,
> The monarch hears;
> Aſſumes the god,
> Affects to nod,
> And ſeems to ſhake the ſpheres."

The magnificence of this ſcene is contraſted with the revelry of the joys of Bacchus. The meaſure alſo is contraſted, and the poet now aſſumes the briſk Trohaic.

> "Bacchus, ever fair and young,
> Drinking-joys did firſt ordain;
> Bacchus' bleſſings are a treaſure,
> Drinking is the ſoldier's pleaſure;
> Rich the treaſure,
> Sweet the pleaſure,
> Sweet is pleasure after pain."

This ſocial ſcene is happily contraſted with the melancholy fate of Darius; both the ſentiments and the verſification ſtrongly prompt commiſeration and ſympathy.

> " Deſerted at his greateſt need,
> By thoſe his former bounty fed,
> He ſung Darius, great and good,
> By too ſevere a fate
> Fall'n, fall'n, fall'n, fall'n,
> Fall'n from his high eſtate,
> And welt'ring in his blood."

The hero is next inflamed with love, and then with revenge ſo violent as to riſe to fury. He will burn the Perſian cities, and extirpate their name from the face of the earth. The violence of this frenzy is happily ſeconded by the rapidity of Anapeſtic meaſure.

> " Revenge! revenge! Timotheus cries;
> See the furies ariſe!
> See the ſnakes that they rear,
> How they hiſs in their hair,
> And the ſparkles that flaſh from their eyes!
> Behold! how they toſs their torches on high!
> How they point to the Perſian abodes,
> And glittering temples of their hoſtile gods!
> The Princes applaud with a furious joy,
> And the King ſeiz'd a flambeau with zeal to deſtroy."

This ode does the greateſt honour to the genius of Dryden. It is finiſhed in every reſpect in the moſt perfect manner; and no language, perhaps, can preſent any production of the kind more beautiful. To render it one of the moſt exquiſite entertainments, it needed only that Handel ſhould add to it all the charms of muſic, a taſk which that great artiſt is held to have performed with the higheſt merit.

Pope wrote another ode in honour of St Cecilia, the inventreſs of the organ. He has attempted to introduce different paſſions, and to contraſt both the ſentiments and the verſification, as had been done by Dryden. He has very happily ſelected for his ſubject the fable of Orpheus and Eurydice, a ſtory naturally tender and pathetic, of which the reverſe of fortune is great, and the different parts are ſtrongly oppoſed. The ſucceſsful expedition of Orpheus to the infernal regions, and the power of his lute, diſplayed on the inhabitants of theſe gloomy abodes; the recovery of Eurydice, and the ſucceſs with which he had achieved the greater part of her eſcape, are painted in the moſt vivid colours, and excite ſtrong ſympathetic emotions of joy and congratulation. The reverſe of fortune reſulting from the raſhneſs of Orpheus, in preſuming to caſt his eyes upon Eurydice, contrary to the law of Proſerpine; her total ſeparation from him for ever, and the frantic deſpair into which he was thrown

by that mortifying event, are alſo delineated with a moſt maſterly hand. It is a little unfortunate, however, for the fame of Pope, that he is little more than a tranſlator of this beautiful fable. It had been delineated and highly finiſhed by the delicate Mantuan bard, and he has hardly added a circumſtance to thoſe exhibited by the Roman poet. Neither has his ode ſo much variety of paſſion as Alexander's Feaſt; and though his verſification has great merit, it alſo ſeems to be inferior in ſimplicity and dignity.

Addiſon was fond of the fame of a poet, though he enjoyed not the beſt powers for acquiring it. He wiſhed, it is ſaid, to rival Pope as a tranſlator of Homer; he even wiſhed to rival him in Lyric merit. He ventured to appear on the ſame ground which Pope and Dryden had occupied with ſo much luſtre; and his ode to St Cecilia exhibited him in a contraſt which could not fail to hurt his reputation; for of all the poetry Addiſon has written, he has ſcarcely compoſed any thing ſo indifferent as this ode. Sometimes it is ſcarcely rhyme. What can be more feeble and proſaic than the two firſt verſes?

"Let us conſecrate the day
To muſic and Cecilia."

The odes of Gray are entitled to high praiſe, though they are unequal in their merit, which is

alſo the fate of different ſtanzas of the ſame ode. His ſentiments are conceived with great vigour and propriety, and his verſification is the moſt laboured, perhaps, in the Engliſh language. He frequently attempts the Pindaric magnificence and ſublimity, and he never fails to appropriate ſome of its darkneſs and obſcurity.

Akenſide aims at eaſe, ingenuity, and elegance, and he is not unſucceſsful. His imagination is delicate and picturesque, his verſification is ſmooth and melodious. He is not defective in ſentiment, and in ornament he has a claim to high applauſe.

LECTURE XLVI.

DIDACTIC POETRY.

POETRY has often been reproached as a mere amuſement, or as an effort of the imagination, which communicates no uſeful knowledge, nor affords any profitable employment to the underſtanding. Books of inſtruction, on the other hand, have incurred the complaint, that they convey knowledge in a manner unpleaſant, often diſguſting; that they addreſs the underſtanding, but diſregard every other faculty, particularly that they are diſpoſed to mortify and irritate the fancy. Readers who ſought knowledge, demanded that poetry ſhould be employed to adorn and impart uſeful truth. Readers who reliſhed amuſement, required that books of information ſhould be embelliſhed with the ornaments of refinement and taſte. The purpoſe of didactic poetry, of which I am now to treat, is

to remove the complaints of both thefe claffes of readers, to refcue the poetical art from the accufation of being converfant only about fubjects of entertainment, and to recommend matter of general utility by elegance of manner and ftyle.

Didactic poetry difcuffes fome branch of ufeful fcience, fome beneficial art, or fome fyftem of prudential or moral conduct, by which the reader may improve his knowledge, his wifdom, or his virtue; and it recommends the difcuffion by all the merits of imagination, and all the charms of poetical compofition.

In executing the ufeful part of the tafk, it collects all the beft theories and moft approved practices, and arranges them, with the reafons of them, in that diftinct and lucid order in which they are moft likely to make the deepeft impreffion. It fometimes adds the moft fagacious reflections, pleafant fpeculations, or important difcoveries, which have refulted from the refearch or the ingenuity of the author. It condefcends alfo to recapitulate and expofe vulgar or irrational principles and practices; which have derived their origin from a neceffity, perhaps, that no longer exifts, or which remain foftered and cherifhed by prejudice or by ignorance.

In executing the ornamental parts, it illuftrates every theory and practice with fimplicity and vivacity; but that the familiarity or the lowlinefs of the topics of which it muft fometimes treat, may not

offend the nicest reader, it is extremely solicitous to add dignity to the illustration by the use of figurative and descriptive phraseology. It seldom calls common objects by their proper names. It employs elevated and metaphorical appellations, or it describes them by their causes or their effects. It bestows much attention to enliven its descriptions and scenes, by throwing into them all the animation with which they are any way connected. Many of the inanimate objects are personified; all the irrational animals are endued with character, sentiment, and design; the human actors are rendered respectable by the activity and virtue of their lives, the sagacity of their judgements, the utility of their occupations; or they are held up as objects of aversion, that the reader may learn, from their folly, absurdity, or criminality, to avoid that conduct which has rendered them ridiculous, odious, or unhappy.

But the great ornaments of didactic poetry are beautiful or interesting episodes. To vary and adorn his subject, the author is allowed frequently to shift the scene, and to introduce any moral, philosophical, or sentimental relation or discussion with which it is connected. No other species of poetry admits so much latitude in this article. If the episodes are properly varied in length, and if they are not very violently forced into his service, he will

not incur much reprehenſion, though he often depart from his principal ſubject, and though the ſum of them taken together even exceed it in extent.

Through the whole of his poem, he may diſplay much knowledge of the particular ſubject he treats, and of many other uſeful and ornamental ſciences and arts; much acquaintance with nature, ſociety, manners, and the human heart. He may be grave, gay, ſublime, eaſy, auſtere, pathetic, as ſhall beſt ſuit his genius and his matter. The verſification muſt be always correct and melodious; and it may be elevated occaſionally to a high degree of energy and dignity. It is alſo ſuſceptible of every ornament, addreſſed to the imagination or the paſſions, of which the different topics or epiſodes admit. Metaphors, compariſons, perſonifications, apoſtrophes, may all be incidentally introduced; and if they are pertinently applied, their appearance will add grace and intereſt to the compoſition.

When this ſpecies of poetry promiſes ſo much improvement and entertainment to the reader, and when the author poſſeſſes ſo many favourable opportunities of diſplaying his knowledge, his genius, and his taſte, we will not be ſurpriſed that it has been attempted by poets of high fame in different ages. Aratus diſcuſſed in Greek the phenomena of the heavens, and Lucretius in Latin the philoſophy of Epicurus. Virgil has treated the whole

theory and practice of agriculture, and Armſtrong the art of preſerving health. The writers on morals and manners are moſtly ſatirical; though Pope has delineated a ſerious and elegant ſyſtem of morals in his Eſſay on Man. The capital ſatiriſts, ancient and modern, are Horace, Juvenal, Pope, and Young. I ſhall attempt to characteriſe the ſeveral productions of theſe authors.

Of the phenomena of Aratus a few fragments only remain, which renders it difficult to form a judgement of its merit. He was admired by the ancients for his fine verſes; and Cicero tranſlated his treatiſe into Latin hexameters. From what remains, we would embrace the opinion of Cicero with reſpect to his verſification; and, although we ſhould entertain no very high opinion of his aſtronomical knowledge, we would conſider him as a man of ſpeculation, who had conceived a liberal and magnificent idea of the ſyſtem of nature, and of the wiſdom and power which direct its operations.

Lucretius was a profeſſed partizan of the ſect of Epicurus; and the deſign of his famous poem, *De Natura Rerum*, is to explain and recommend the doctrines of that philoſopher. He is the moſt able advocate, perhaps, that ever undertook the defence of theſe doctrines. His knowledge of the ſyſtem was very complete. His zeal for its ſucceſs was uncommonly ardent, and his genius was fully ade-

quate to the task of adorning it with every charm of poetical merit: Often sublime, always elevated, rich in the ornaments of imagination, acute and shrewd in his reasonings and reflections; picturesque, sonorous, often melodious, in his versification. Notwithstanding the abstract complexion of many of the topics he treats, particularly the nature of the human mind, future existence, and the formation of the world from the fortuitous concourse of pre-existent atoms, all discussions little favourable to poetical composition, yet he seldom fails to express his thoughts not only with perspicuity, but even with dignity and grace. It is surprising with what consistency and plausibility he has decorated one of the most whimsical and irrational theories that ever entered the imagination of a philosopher. Even the Atheistical system of Epicurus, which, while it maintains the existence, denies the providence of the Gods, is so artfully delineated by just and severe reprehension of the absurdities and miseries of superstition, and by elegant description of the happiness of the Gods in their intermundane mansions, remote from the anxieties and distractions of human affairs, that the reader is detained with satisfaction to contemplate the picture, though he disapproves of the sophistry and impiety with which it abounds. Every reader of taste will perceive the beauty of the following elegant and picturesque lines:

"Omnis enim per se Divum natura necesse est,
Immortali ævo, summa cum pace, fruatur;
Semota a nostris rebus, sejunctaque longe.
Ipsa, suis pollens opibus, nihil indiga nostri,
Nec bene promeritis capitur, nec tangitur ira."

His high veneration for the genius and character of Epicurus is expressed with similar grandeur; and the fortitude with which he died is artfully contrasted with the repinings of inferior men.

"Obit Epicurus, decurso lumine vitæ,
Qui genus humanum longe superavit, et omnes
Præstinxit, stellas exortus ut ætherius sol.
Tu vero dubitabis, et indignabere obire."

These specimens have much poetical excellence, and suggest a very favourable opinion of the genius of Lucretius. The Roman language possesses nothing of superior merit in point of versification, except the highly finished composition of the incomparable Mantuan bard.

The genius of Virgil, closely attended with that modesty which generally accompanies extraordinary talents, seems to have collected, by slow steps, the degree of confidence which finally emboldened him to attempt epic poetry. He began his experiments with humble efforts in the pastoral line; though even there we behold his ardent muse, frequently bursting beyond the barriers by which she should

naturally have been reftrained. He next undertook a bolder theme, to treat, in a didactic ftrain, the operations of the ufeful art of hufbandry; and it was not till he had finifhed this work with a degree of merit which all refined ages have admired, that he prefumed to attempt the Æneid. The Georgics only come under our prefent confideration, the Æneid will afford fubject for a future difcuffion.

Agriculture was perhaps fuggefted to Virgil as a proper fubject for a didactic poem by his familiarity with the operations of the art, in the humble ftation he feems to have lived at Mantua, before he had the good fortune to recommend himfelf to the notice of the Emperor of Rome. It is certain that he occupied a fmall farm of his own, and probably fupported, or at leaft amufed himfelf, by fuperintending its occupations. He difcovers an intimacy with the fubject, which can fcarcely be fuppofed to be derived from any lefs fatisfactory fource than experience. It is too particular and complete to be the refult of reading or fpeculation. Had it not been for this favourable circumftance, we fhould have imagined that he could not well have chofen a fubject more refractory to poetical embellifhment. The lowlinefs and vulgarity of many of its practices, refpectable only from their neceffity or utility, and the total want of dignity in the whole of them, appear not a little hoftile to the elevation and ornament required by the nature of this fpecies

of poetry. But true genius furmounts all obftacles; and it feems a matter of fmall confequence what kind of fubject it fhall choofe to adorn. It muft at leaft be allowed, that no didactic poem, ancient or modern, fupplies every requifite of that fpecies of compofition, fo completely as the Georgics.

The different branches of the ufeful art are methodically arranged, and diftinctly, rationally, and fully difcuffed. Utenfils, climates, foils, weather, figns, and every topic of inquiry connected with the art, are defcribed, and treated with intelligence and difcernment. A rich vein of natural hiftory, not fpeculative, but deduced from obfervation, and applicable to ufe, and an ardent zeal to recommend induftry and innocence, pervade the whole work.

The fubject is divided into four great parts, of which are formed as many books. The firft treats of the culture of corn; the fecond of vines and olives; the third, of breeding and rearing cattle; and the fourth, of the management and produce of bees. Among thefe different difcuffions, the author has interwoven every philofophical, mythological, moral, or fentimental epifode, of which he could with any confiftency lay hold. During this long courfe, he never degenerates into vulgarity or infipidity. He is always perfpicuous and dignified, and difplays a rich, animated ftrain of poetry. He adorns every utenfil and operation, however fami-

liar, with propriety and grace, and artfully adds intereſt, by inſinuating the utility to which they may be ſubſervient. Even his irrational animals are endued with character and deſign, and are exhibited as objects of attachment and regard.

In his Epiſodes, the higheſt merit of his genius is diſplayed. He is ſublime and pathetic in an eminent degree, and he indulges in all the more paſſionate figures of eloquence. Bold perſonifications, apoſtrophes, ardent interrogations, are frequently with much addreſs and effect called to his aid. He has been uncommonly attentive to the verſification, which is more finiſhed than that of the Æneid itſelf, and of courſe is the moſt perfect in the Latin language. It is ſweetneſs, elegance, and melody. I cannot reſiſt the pleaſure of producing a ſpecimen of his merit in theſe epiſodes, and of the dexterity with which he introduces them. He wiſhed to compliment Auguſtus with a picture of the agitations of nature which were ſaid to take place at the aſſaſſination of his kinſman Julius Cæſar, by which it was underſtood that the Gods highly diſapproved that deed. He artfully and ingeniouſly takes hold of the ſigns of the weather, which may be derived from the appearance of the ſun, to exhibit this beautiful and ſublime piece of painting.

" Sol tibi ſigna dabit. Solem quis dicere falſum
Audeat? Ille etiam cæcos inſtare tumultus

Sœpe monet, fraudemque et operta tumescere bella.
Ille etiam extincto miseratus Cæsare Romam,
Cum caput obscura nitidum ferrugine texit,
Impiaque eternum timuerunt sæcula noctem."

Again,

"Armorum sonitum toto Germania cælo
Audit; insolitis tremuerunt motibus Alpes.
Vox quoque per lucos vulgo exaudita silentes
Ingens; et simulacra modis pallentia miris
Visa sub obscurum noctis; pecudesque locutæ,
Infandum, sistunt amnes, terræque dehiscunt;
Et moestum illacrimat templis ebur, æraque sudant."

He connects this digression with his subject by the following beautiful lines, descriptive of the feelings of the people, prompted by these awful exhibitions in the heavens.

"Ergo inter sese paribus concurrere telis
Romanas acies iterum videre Philippi;
Nec fuit indignum Superis bis sanguine nostro
Emathiam, et latos Hæmi pinguescere campos.
Scilicet et tempus veniet, cum finibus illis
Agricola incurvo terram molitus aratro,
Exesa inveniet, scabra rubigine pila;
Aut gravibus rastris galeas pulsabit inanes:
Grandiaque effossis mirabitur ossa sepulchris."

Armstrong possessed a large portion of the genius of Virgil, and, like him, has adorned a subject na-

turally unpromising, the History of Health, with all the embellishments of fine versification and elegant fancy. He elevates and beautifies every precept, and he is fortunate in episodes. The true spirit of poetry is conspicuous in all he writes, and his compositions cannot be perused without instruction and pleasure. He appears to be one of the best Didactic poets in the English language, and not inferior to any ancient author in the same line, except Virgil. But as his poetical character is well known, I shall not think it requisite to illustrate it farther.

The Essay on Man admitted fewer embellishments and episodes than the poems I have mentioned. The author's design was more serious than that of any other writer of his class. Instruction was his main object, and no ornaments are introduced but what are manifestly subservient to this end. He employs metaphors frequently, and sometimes comparisons, but they are never mere addresses to the fancy of the reader, they always contribute to illustrate and impress the matter.

This famous essay is literally a system of morals, founded on the celebrated doctrine first broached by Plato, and afterwards explained and recommended by Leibnitz and Lord Shaftsbury, That no evil is admitted into the system of nature but what is inseparable from its existence; and that all possible provision is made for the happiness of every creature it contains. The author acknowledges that the gravi-

ty of his subject was more adapted to a discussion in prose, than a treatise in verse, but that he preferred the latter, because it was more adapted to his genius, and was more likely to engage the attention and recollection of the reader.

The discussion is ingenious and instructive. We, however, desiderate that distinct and lucid arrangement which we discern in the productions of the other two eminent moderns. Neither has the versification all the merits which shine in his other works; it is frequently abrupt, if not obscure, and possesses not the melody and flow of his other poetry. The abstract nature of the subject, perhaps, and his sincere desire to instruct, rather than to please, may furnish an apology.

Satirists are a species of negative didactic poets, who teach and amuse by censuring what is wrong, and exposing what is foolish. They seldom attempt to inculcate positively what is good, or to recommend what is decent; they leave this task to moralists and public instructors. They would be most reputable and useful writers, were they successful in what they undertake, to banish iniquity and folly from society. They are divided into two classes.

One class attacks immorality and impropriety with a stern look and severe reprehension. It paints them in all their deformity as objects of aversion, and it fails not to inflict upon them that censure they deserve. It allows few of those excuses and

alleviations which are usually urged for the errors of men. It delineates them as bad as they really are, and is sometimes inclined rather to exaggerate than to apologise. It wishes to deter mankind from vicious or foolish actions or sentiments, by the odium, the misery, the disapprobation which attend them.

The other class assaults vice and folly with ridicule. It exposes the whims, the oddities, the absurdities, and the crimes of men, in such a manner as to make them ashamed. But if ridicule does not succeed, it relinquishes them as incorrigible. An author of this class is never angry, he is never even serious. When a crime should rouse the resentment of the former class, and draw from them severe chastisement, he remains unmoved, and smiles at the culprit as a fool. Horace altogether, and Pope in some measure, are satirists of the latter class; Juveval and Young belong to the former.

Horace was an Epicurean in philosophy, and, according to the principles of that indolent sect, seems to have adopted a rule of conduct, that nothing should ruffle his temper. He appears to have considered the vices of his countrymen as not deserving his resentment; or to have been of opinion that reprehension was not the way to reform them. He accordingly never discomposes himself when he mentions them. He smiles even at avarice and adultery, and amuses himself with diverting pictures

of the aukward and ridiculous ſituations into which men allow themſelves to be brought by theſe enormities. He excels in deſcriptions of human manners; and no ſatiriſt has been more prolific in expoſing vice and follies. Though the ſeverity of his cenſures bears no proportion to the irregularities he reprehends, yet they cannot fail to have ſome effect. They are ſure not to give offence, and there are many perſons of impatient tempers who will liſten to the polite ridicule of Horace, but would revolt againſt the rebukes of Juvenal. Many men are more afraid of being ſingular, than of being vicious; and with all ſuch men, to expoſe vice as indecent or fooliſh, will have greater influence, than to hold it forth as criminal.

Juvenal is a grave, ſevere ſatiriſt, and a ſtern cenſor of the errors and follies of mankind. He never condeſcends to ſmile, or to inſinuate improprieties without reprehending them. He ſeems to conſider ceremony and politeneſs as marks of inſincerity, and as trifling with the evil, inſtead of attempting a radical cure. He ſeldom takes notice of folly, but, when he does, he touches her airy and volatile form with a firm and rough hand. He thinks her deſerving of more ſerious treatment than to laugh at her, becauſe ſhe may be either the companion or the parent of iniquity. He diſplays, at the ſame time, much good ſenſe, much knowledge of the world, and a great ſhare of the faculty of

imagination. All his pictures are ſtriking reſemblances; and there are not many enormities, even of the corrupted age in which he lived, that he has not characteriſed and reprehended. The gravity, however, and ſeverity of his temper, are highly conſpicuous in every part of his work. He diſcovers a diſpoſition to exaggerate the criminality of offenders. He ſeems pleaſed with beſtowing merited chaſtiſement on a perſonage eminently vicious; and he artfully heightens the colouring, that the cenſure may appear more applicable and better founded. He delights in forming ſyſtems of iniquity, and to interpret the motives and actions of culprits according to the rule which leads to think of them as unfavourably as poſſible. Even his verſification ſavours of the ſame diſpoſition; it is nervous, expreſſive, and ſonorous, but it wants ſweetneſs, eaſe, and melody. It is rough, ſtately, and harſh. In a word, he always inflicts correction with juſtice, but, at the ſame time, with an auſterity and willingneſs which makes even the innocent tremble.

Pope attempts to unite the good humour of Horace with the gravity of Juvenal, but he leans more to the manner of the latter, than to that of the former. He was naturally of a keen temper, and he was particularly irritable by reflections which glanced either at his private character or his fame. Many of his ſatirical writings were prompted by this ſpirit; and we regret that a man of his genius

ſhould have waſted his time, and diſturbed his repoſe, by retaliating on critics animated by a degree of ignorance or folly which rendered them contemptible. When I make this remark, it will be perceived that I include other parts of his works under the denomination of ſatires, than thoſe which bear that appellation. I conſider both his mock heroic poems, the Rape of the Lock, and the Dunciad, as of this character, as well as his Epiſtles and Imitations.

In the two former he has interwoven a great deal of vivacity and humour in the cenſure of the follies and improprieties he reprehends, while the ſatire is rendered more poignant by the dramatic form of the poems, and the highly finiſhed ſcenery with which they abound. In theſe poems he does not undertake himſelf to paint the characters as fantaſtic or fooliſh, he introduces them to expoſe themſelves, and to diſplay their own ſentiments and conduct in all their natural vanity and ſingularity. In his Imitations he is more grave and ſerious, and his manner partakes leſs of the vivacity and pleaſantry of Horace.

Young has much merit as a ſatiriſt. He is not ſo ſevere as Juvenal, though he is always in earneſt, and never attempts to excite a laugh. He appears as a ſincere moraliſt, zealous to correct the vices and follies of mankind, by holding up pictures to excite their reflection on the impropriety of them. His

Love of Fame difplays much knowledge of human nature, and no fmall merit in point of verfification. He is a fatirift whom we love and refpect, becaufe we conceive him to be actuated by good nature, and backward to reprehend, were it poffible to reform by more gentle means. He poffeffes neither the fprightlinefs of Horace, nor the vehemence of Juvenal, but he is more dignified than the former, and more amiable than the latter. He is not fo facetious and pleafant as Horace, but neither is he fo four and forbidding as Juvenal. Horace feems to have confulted his own amufement, and Juvenal the gratification of his fpleen, as much as the entertainment or emolument of their readers. Young writes to improve mankind, and, with the regard and affection of a parent, chaftifes only that he may amend. Though we wifh he had more mirth, yet we refpect him as an ufeful author, and a genuine friend of virtue.

LECTURE XLVII.

DESCRIPTIVE POETRY.

DESCRIPTIVE poetry is addreſſed chiefly to the imagination, though it attempts alſo to convey many uſeful impreſſions to the underſtanding and the heart. The deſign of it is to exhibit beautiful pictures of nature or art, ſo as to communicate all the information and pleaſure which the reader could receive from an actual ſurvey of the objects. It ſometimes preſents large collections of objects, as thoſe which occur in one period of the year, or thoſe which readily preſent themſelves when the mind is in a particular frame, lively and gay, or diſconſolate and dejected. Of the former kind are the Seaſons of Thomſon; of the latter kind are the Allegro and Penſeroſo of Milton. But the greater part of deſcriptive poetry is intermixed with other

kinds of poetical compoſition; and there is no kind, whether epic, dramatic, didactic, paſtoral, or lyric, that does not occaſionally demand its aſſiſtance.

Though all poets attempt to deſcribe, and all men are endowed more or leſs with the power of forming pictures of what they have ſeen or imagined, yet the faculty which produces good deſcription is extremely rare; it requires an uncommon portion of vivacity and vigour of imagination, and a large ſhare of judgement. The former ſuggeſts the circumſtances which the picture demands, and the latter ſelects thoſe which are beſt calculated for making the deepeſt impreſſion. All poets, almoſt, copy deſcriptions from one another. The inferior ſort ſcarcely attempt to vary the expreſſion. Even the more capital performers exhibit ſometimes an aſtoniſhing reſemblance. If we except Homer, Virgil, Shakſpeare, Milton, Thomſon, and Oſſian, I doubt whether we can be ſaid to poſſeſs another original deſcriptive poet. Even ſome of theſe I have mentioned, though originals in many inſtances, are imitators in others; for many examples may be ſpecified in which Virgil, and not a few in which Milton, manifeſtly copy from Homer.

Though deſcriptive is not the moſt exalted ſpecies of poetry, though it pretends not to intereſt the paſſions and aſſail the heart, yet it affords a very exquiſite amuſement, and is entitled to a large ſhare

of fame. But to deferve the leaft portion of fame, it muft poffefs novelty, either in the fubject, or in the manner of reprefentation. If borrowed, it is ftripped of all its power to pleafe, and cannot obtain any approbation. It has often been urged as an apology for imitation, that new fubjects of defcription are not to be found, that all nature has been ranfacked, and all her ftores pre-occupied. Had this obfervation been well founded, Thomfon had never compofed his Seafons, becaufe there would have remained no feafons to be fung. The fuccefs of this author is a proof that the fource of defcription was not then exhaufted, notwithftanding the large draughts of many confpicuous writers who had preceded him; that novelty was not found, becaufe it had not been fought; and that former poets had fearched the works of their predeceffors, rather than the volume of nature. Thomfon proceeded in a different manner. He furveyed all nature with an attentive eye; he fpent much of his time in traverfing her moft picturefque fcenes, attentive to "each rural fight, each rural found," and he communicates with energy to the reader thofe impreffions which had taken firmeft hold of his own imagination.

In defcription, the great art feems to be, not to fpecify every minute particular, but to felect the moft ftriking and picturefque circumftances, which

would naturally make the deepeſt impreſſion on the mind of the beholder. The following example will beſt illuſtrate this rule. It is a picture of an infectious diſtemper, by Thomſon, which happened to the fleet in the memorable expedition againſt Carthagena.

" ——You, gallant Vernon, ſaw
The miſerable ſcene. You pitying ſaw
To infant weakneſs ſunk the warrior's arm:
Saw the deep-racking pang, the ghaſtly form,
The lip pale quivering, and the beamleſs eye
No more with ardour bright! You heard the groans
Of agoniſing ſhips from ſhore to ſhore!
Heard nightly plung'd amid the ſullen wave
The frequent corſe; while on each other fix'd
In ſad preſage, the blank aſſiſtants ſeem'd
Silent, to aſk whom Fate would next demand!"

It is unneceſſary to offer any comment on this beautiful deſcription; every reader muſt feel its force. The frequent plunging of the corſe in the full n wave duringthe night, is particularly ſtriking, and marks ſtrongly the havock of the infection. Thomſon poſſeſſes the firſt rank in deſcriptive poetry; not that bolder landſcapes are not ſometimes to be found in the capital poets, but no author ſeems to have collected as many beautiful pictures of nature and art, and has delineated them with as much ſkill. There are very few images in the Sea-

fons that are not entirely new, either in the fubject or the attitude; and their impreffions, accordingly, come home to the mind with that energy which is the beft characteriftic of their originality. The reader immediately recognifes in the defcription the objects he has feen or heard in nature, and he often receives from the defcription a more lively fenfation than he had done from the actual furvey of the objects. Had Thomfon's judgement and tafte been equal to the vigour of his imagination, he had reached perfection in defcriptive poetry, and had left nothing to his reader but to be pleafed, and to admire. Unfortunately, however, he judges fometimes of the ductility of the reader's imagination from the fenfibility of his own, and addreffes him with perfonifications and bold metaphors, before the latter is fufficiently interefted to relifh them. He is apt, alfo, to elevate the ftyle above the tone of the fentiment, and to indulge in the ufe of epithets which are either redundant or obfcure.

But, if we will candidly overlook thefe defects, no defcriptive poems, perhaps, equal the Seafons. They have been univerfally read and relifhed, and they acquire much additional intereft from the enlarged views of fcience, arts, and fociety, with which they are interfperfed. The author, on every occafion, difplays the moft ardent defire to pro-

mote the happineſs of mankind, and the warm benevolence of a virtuous heart.

But the whole merit almoſt of Thomſon's genius conſiſted in deſcription. He poſſeſſed little influence over the ſtronger paſſions, though ſome epiſodes in the Seaſons, and ſcenes in the plays, diſcover a capacity for managing a tender and moderate paſſion. His plays are elegant and correct compoſitions; they contain many noble and virtuous ſentiments, but they are ſparing of incidents, and they abound with declamation.

Had Milton ſtudied nature with as much attention as Thomſon, he would probably have excelled all poets in the livelineſs and beauty of his deſcriptions. All his works ſhine with the richneſs of his imagination. He is uncommonly happy in the ſelection of the moſt pertinent circumſtances, and in the uſe of the moſt ſignificant figures, particularly metaphors, which demonſtrate the exquiſite ſenſibility of his fancy.

He ſeems, however, to have taken a general ſurvey of nature, rather than to have attended minutely to her particular operations. He never dwells long on a topic in deſcription, and he rather glances at it than delineates it. But no author ſurpaſſes him in ſelecting the moſt prominent and pictureſque ingredients of a figure which make the deepeſt impreſſion. He is never general or diffuſe, qualities which are found to be very hoſtile to the ſucceſs of

this ſpecies of writing. In treating of epic poetry, I ſhall afterwards have an opportunity of diſcuſſing more fully the merit of Milton's genius; in the mean time, I ſhall offer a ſpecimen of his deſcriptive talents from his Allegro and Penſeroſo. The purpoſe of the former of theſe poems is to preſent a rich group of chearful and pleaſant objects, calculated to excite joyful emotions; the purpoſe of the latter is to contraſt the former, and to exhibit a collection of objects calculated to prompt penſive melancholy. He thus deſcribes the ſcenes of morning in the Allegro.

"To hear the lark begin his flight,
And ſinging, ſtartle the dull night,
From his watch-tower in the ſkies,
Till the dappled dawn doth riſe:
While the cock, with lively din,
Scatters the rear of darkneſs thin,
And to the ſtack, or the barn-door,
Stately ſtruts his dames before:
Oft liſtening how the hounds and horn
Cheerly rouſe the ſlumbering morn;
While the ploughman near at hand
Whiſtles o'er the furrow'd land,
And the milk-maid ſinging blythe,
And the mower whets his ſcythe;
And every ſhepherd tells his tale,
Under the hawthorn in the dale."

The Penseroso presents the following account of the objects of the evening.

" Oft on a plat of rising ground,
I hear the far-off curfeu sound
Over some wide-watered shore,
Swinging slow with sullen roar.
Or, if the air will not permit,
Some still removed place will fit,
Where glowing embers through the room
Teach light to counterfeit a gloom,
Far from all resort of mirth,
Save the criket on the hearth,
Or the bellman's drowsy charm,
To bless the doors from nightly harm ;
Or let my lamp and midnight hour,
Be seen in some high lonely tow'r.
Sometime let gorgeous tragedy,
In scepter'd pall, come sweeping by,
Presenting Thebes' or Pelop's line,
Or the tale of Troy divine."

The genius of Milton, however, is very unequal in these shorter productions. Many of his translations and paraphrases partake so little of the merit of the author, that we should hardly admit them to have descended from the same hand. If we except Samson Agonistes, Comus, Lycidas, and the two poems I have mentioned, the others, for the sake of the reputation of the author, should have been consigned to the flames. They have been preser-

ved by the partiality of friendſhip, and ſerve only to ſhow how delicate an affair genius is, and how little the greateſt men have it at command, even when they are diſpoſed to employ it. Had we known no more of Milton than we can learn from theſe tranſlations and paraphraſes, we ſhould have ranked him with Sternhold and Hopkins, rather than with the author of Paradiſe Loſt.

The elegant genius of Parnell has produced ſome beautiful examples of deſcriptive poetry, and it is much to be regretted he had not indulged the world with more ſpecimens. He poſſeſſed a fine imagination, a moſt correct taſte, and great knowledge of human nature. His verſification is not inferior to that of Pope in melody and conciſeneſs, and is ſuperior in ſimplicity and perſpicuity. It teems with inſtruction, with the genuine language of the heart; and there is no poetry, perhaps, which the reader can peruſe ſo often with pleaſure. The Hermit is an extremely beautiful, moral, deſcriptive poem, fraught with important inſtruction, communicated in a ſimple, but dignified manner, and recommended by the moſt delicate appeals to the imagination. I will therefore make no apology for extracting the ſubſequent quotation, which recounts the reception of the hermit at the houſe of the miſer.

" As near the miſer's heavy door they drew,
Fierce riſing guſts with ſudden fury blew;

The nimble lightning, mix'd with ſhowers, began,
And o'er their heads loud rolling thunder ran.
Here long they knock, but knock or call in vain,
Driv'n by the wind, and batter'd by the rain.
At length ſome pity warm'd the maſter's breaſt;
('Twas then his threſhold firſt receiv'd a gueſt).
Slow creaking turns the door, with jealous care,
And half he welcomes in the ſhiv'ring pair;
Bread of the coarſeſt ſort, with meagre wine,
(Each hardly granted), ſerv'd them both to dine;
And when the tempeſt firſt appear'd to ceaſe,
A ready warning bid them part in peace.
With ſtill remark the pond'ring hermit view'd,
In one ſo rich, a life ſo poor and rude;
"And why ſhould ſuch," within himſelf he cry'd,
"Lock the loſt wealth a thouſand want beſide?"
But what new marks of wonder ſoon take place
In every ſettling feature of his face,
When from his veſt the young companion bore
That cup the generous landlord own'd before,
And paid profuſely with the precious bowl,
The ſtinted kindneſs of his churliſh ſoul!
But now the clouds in airy tumults fly;
The ſun, emerging, opes an azure ſky;
A freſher green the ſmelling leaves diſplay,
And glittering as they tremble, cheer the day.
The weather courts them from the poor retreat,
And the glad maſter bolts the wary gate."

The whole of this intereſting ſcene is painted with the moſt vivid colours, and it may be held forth as one of the moſt chaſte and finiſhed ſpecimens of

descriptive poetry. We behold no forced elevation, no tumid expression, no superfluous epithets, either to complete the rhymes, or to impose on the reader. There is not a word which is not the most pertinent that could be found to denote the thought; and there is not an epithet that does not signify some important circumstance in the description. The reader will particularly feel (for it is not left to his observation) the propriety of the phraseology which delineates the storm in the beginning of the example, and the characteristic description of the door of the miser, that "slow creaking turns with jealous care," at the admission of the guests; but, after their departure, "the glad master bolts the wary gate," as if it had acquired something of the inhospitable disposition of its possessor.

All the great epic poets exhibit eminent specimens of descriptive poetry. Homer, Virgil, and Ossian, excel in it. The following picture of desolation, by Ossian, is conceived with much vigour of imagination.

"I have seen the walls of Balclutha, but they were desolate. The flames had resounded in the halls, and the voice of the people is heard no more. The stream of Clutha was removed from its course by the fall of the walls. The thistle shook there its lonely head; the moss whistled in the wind. The fox looked out from the window, and the rank grass of the wall waved round his head. Desolate

is the dwelling of Morna; silence is in the house of her fathers!"

The chief errors committed in descriptions, are the admission of unmeaning or supernumerary epithets and phrases, the introduction of general terms, and the intermixture of trivial or insignificant circumstances clothed in pompous and splendid language. The best poets are sometimes faulty in all these articles.

Thomson is extremely licentious in the use of epithets which either have no meaning, or have it preoccupied by the words to which they are annexed. "Incumbent night," "living winds," "covering grave," "quaint conceit," and many more, are of this description. Even the "canis pruinis" of Horace seems to present a superfluous, if not an insignificant epithet. But the following examples are still more reprehensible for tautological circumstances and words. Horace thus endeavours to persuade his mistress to repair to his country-seat. *Od.* xvii. *lib.* 1.

> "Hinc tibi copia
> Manabit ad plenum, benigno
> Ruris honorum opulenta cornu."

The idea of plenty appears no less than four times in this short sentence, always applied to the same

thing. It is included in the substantive "copia," it is repeated in the adjective "opulenta," it appears again in the phrase "ad plenum," and it recurs the last time in the adjective "benigno." If Horace observed his own rule with regard to this ode, "nonum prematur in annum," and frequently revised during that long interval, it cannot be denied that he had read rather carelessly.

Virgil furnishes an example little less censurable, in the third book of the Æneid.

"Postquam altum tenuere rates nec jam amplius ullæ
Apparent terræ; cœlum undique et undique pontus.
Tum mihi cæruleus supra caput adstitit imber,
Noctem hiememque ferens, et inhorruit unda tenebris."

Not to mention the apparent inconsistency of the expression, "cœlum undique et undique pontus," the idea of darkness is four times exhibited in the last lines. It is included in "imber," it appears again in "cæruleus," again in the phrase "noctem hiememque ferens," and finally, in the words "inhorruit unda tenebris."

All general terms are improper in descriptions, because they suggest either no idea at all, or none that is fixed; while the essence of picturesque description consists in prompting conceptions which are palpable, and of which the mind of course takes firm hold. These can result only from objects particular and distinct.

Shakspeare, to expose the absurdity of attempting a thing impracticable, says with great energy in Henry the Fifth: "You may as well go about to turn the sun into ice, by fanning in his face with a peacock's feather." Had the poet made the expression general, by leaving out the "peacock's feather," he would have mutilated the picture, and debilitated the impression. How feeble would have been the following phraseology? "You may as well go about to turn the sun into ice by fanning in his face." Had he retained the "feather," but dropt the "peacock," the expression would have been more picturesque: "You may as well go about to turn the sun into ice, by fanning in his face with a feather." Even this picture, however, is much inferior in beauty and vivacity to the particular language the poet hath thought proper to adopt: "You may as well go about to turn the sun into ice, by fanning in his face with a peacock's feather." The mind grasps the image at once, and is struck with its sprightliness and propriety.

The principal poets have erred in admitting general terms into descriptions. Virgil, to paint the happiness of an innocent country-life, employs these beautiful lines, *Geor.* ii. 467.

"At secura quies et nescia fallere vita,
Dives opum variarum, at latis otia fundis,
Speluncæ, vivique lacus; at frigida Tempe,

Mugitusque boum, mollesque sub arbore somni
Non absunt."

All the circumstances of this beautiful group are particular and defined, except one, "dives opum variarum," which may include many articles. Among these the mind wanders, without perceiving accurately either their number or their nature. Accordingly, if we reflect, we shall find that these words communicate no distinct idea or impression.

Forced elevation of the expression above the tone of the thought, is another error not uncommon in description. Homer relates, that Achilles commanded his domestics to prepare a vessel to heat water for washing the dead body of Patroclus, which they accordingly performed. Nothing can be more simple than the language of the poet. Things are called by their proper names, and very few epithets are added. Pope must improve this simple phraseology, and he has communicated to it an air of ridicule, by the pompous and figurative expression of his translation. *Iliad*, xviii. 405.

"A massy caldron of stupendous frame
They brought, and plac'd it o'er the rising flame;
Then heap the lighted wood; the flame divides
Beneath the vase, and climbs around its sides.
In its wide womb they pour the rushing stream,
The boiling water bubbles to the brim."

Poets sometimes admit contradictions and absurdities into descriptions. Virgil, delineating the resentment of Neptune, on account of the storm excited by Æolus, which had scattered the fleet of Æneas, presents the following picture of the god of the sea. *Æneid*, i. 126.

> " Graviter commotus, et alto
> Prospiciens, summa placidum caput extulit unda."

If " commotus" be applied to the countenance of Neptune, it implies a contradiction to " placidum," which must include the appearance of the face. If it shall be supposed to relate only to the mind of the god, still the matter is not much mended, because the countenance should correspond to the mind; and it is unnatural to suppose the latter deeply agitated when the former is serene. Pope thus describes the death of a Trojan who was killed in flying from the battle:

> " He fled, but flying left his life behind."

A similar impropriety occurs in the 22d book of the Odyssey:

> " Full through his neck the weighty falchion sped,
> Along the pavement roll'd the muttering head."

That the lips may be ſuppoſed to quiver in the agonies of death, even when the head is ſeparated from the body, or that the head may exhibit a convulſive motion after ſeparation, are bold, though not unnatural ſuppoſitions. But that the head ſhould retain diſcernment, and the lips ſhould mutter, that is, ſhould utter articulate ſounds, exceeds all credibility. For theſe ſlips the tranſlator is accountable.

It often happens, that a deſcription preſents objects which would be extremely diſagreeable to the ſight, while the deſcription itſelf is not only not diſagreeable, but conveys high pleaſure. This is a curious phænomenon, and merits ſome attention. Two cauſes ſeem to concur in producing this effect.

A poetical deſcription reſembles an hiſtorical painting, the merit of which conſiſts in communicating to the different figures the ſame poſitions and appearance that they hold in nature. And although the figures be diſagreeable, yet the picture may yield much pleaſure, becauſe the merit of it lies in the accuracy of the imitation. The mind ſurveys with delight the excellence of an art which can imitate nature ſo completely. The purpoſe of the deſcription, as well as of the picture, is to impart exact ideas of the objects, though it operates by words inſtead of colours. The imitation in both caſes is the chief ſource of the pleaſure. The pleaſure of the imitation much more than counterba-

lances the difguft arifing from the infpection of the object. This feems to be the firft caufe. Words, again, have a beauty in their found and arrangement, independent of their fignification; the merit of the execution in the picture, and of the compofition in the defcription, affords delight. This feems to be the fecond caufe. Both caufes concur to counteract the difguft excited by the object.

Thefe remarks point out the greateft beauty of defcription, which takes place when the object, the imitation, and the expreffion, all concur to augment the pleafure of the reader. In all other cafes thefe partially oppofe the effects of one another.

If, however, an object prompt horror, no excellence of imitation or language can recommend its defcription. The picture of fin in Paradife Loft, though drawn with the brighteft colours, is of this clafs. It excites horror, and all Milton's eloquence cannot render it tolerable. I fuppofe the poet was actuated by moral, rather than poetical views. He wifhed to render her odious, that fhe might be hated for her natural deformity. He has, however, pufhed the matter too far. He would have made her more deteftable, perhaps, had he painted her lefs fhocking. She is thus purfued by death:

" I fled, but he purfu'd, and fwifter far,
Me overtook, his mother all difmay'd;
And in embraces forcible and foul,
Engendering with me, of that rape begat

Thoſe yelling monſters, that with ceaſeleſs cry
Surround me, as thou ſaw'ſt, hourly conceiv'd,
And hourly born, with ſorrow infinite
To me; for when they liſt, into the womb
That bred them, they return, and howl, and gnaw
My bowels, their repaſt."

Virgil has introduced a deſcription of the Cyclops eating human fleſh, little leſs horrible. Diſguſt is the only feeling it can excite. All the elegance of the imagination and compoſition of the author ſinks under the unſupportable weight of the ſubject.

"Domus ſanie dapibuſque cruentis,
Intus opaca, ingens. Ipſe arduus, altaque pulſat
Sidera, (Dii talem terris avertite peſtem),
Nec viſu facilis, nec dictu affabilis ulli.
Viſceribus miſerorum et ſanguine veſcitur atro.
Vidi egomet, duo de numero quum corpora noſtro
Prenſa manu magna medio reſupinis in antro
Frangeret ad ſaxum, ſanieque experſa natarent
Limina; vidi atro quum membra fluentia tabo
Manderet et tepidi tremerent ſub dentibus artus."
ÆNEID, lib. iii. 618.

No poet ſhould introduce ſuch pictures. They ſhock the feelings of the reader, and make him ſuſpect the taſte or the ſenſibility of the author.

LECTURE XLVIII.

EPIC POETRY—FABLE—CHARACTERS.

I HAVE difcuffed the inferior kinds of poetry, Paftoral, Lyric, Didactic, Defcriptive, and am now to examine Epic and Dramatic. The two laft are the nobleft kinds of compofition human genius can produce, and confpicuous merit has in them accordingly been very rare. It has often been controverted, and is ftill undecided, whether an Epic poem or a tragedy is the more illuftrious production, or is entitled to greater fame; but the controverfy will never, perhaps, be determined to the fatisfaction of every judge, becaufe no fixed principles exift by which it can be decided, and becaufe difference of feelings, which always influence judgement, will lead different men to different conclufions. A reader fond of heroic conceptions, and great actions, will give his fuffrage in favour of

epic; one of a ſentimental conſtitution will prefer tragic poetry. But if rarity of excellence ſhall be adopted as a rule of judgement, we muſt grant precedency to the form r; for the number of epic poems which have been finiſhed with ſucceſs, from the commencement of the poetic art to the preſent time, is very ſmall.

Of all kinds of compoſition, epic poetry and tragedy attempt the moſt vigorous attacks upon the heart, with a view to promote its improvement. Their object is to exerciſe and ſtrengthen its good diſpoſitions, by the exhibition of illuſtrious or intereſting actions, or to engage the paſſions in behalf of ſome national or particular leſſon of virtue. Affections and paſſions are ſtrengthened, and formed into habits, whether good or bad, by exerciſe. The moraliſt tells us what paſſions are connected with our happineſs and our duty, which therefore we ſhould ſeek every opportunity to excite and to cheriſh; on the other hand, what paſſions are oppoſite both to our happineſs and our duty, and which accordingly we ſhould endeavour to repreſs and extirpate. But he applies to our reaſon only, and leaves us to diſcover and apply the means of cheriſhing or repreſſing theſe paſſions.

Epic and tragic poets pretend moſt ſeaſonably and effectually to interfere, to ſupply the defects of the moraliſt. They ſatisfy the underſtanding as well as

he, of the rectitude and utility of what they recommend; but they proceed much farther, they engage the heart in behalf of the moral they inculcate. They tell an interefting ftory, which exhibits the bad effects of indulging thofe paffions they wifh to difcourage, and the good effects of cherifhing thofe paffions they defire to cultivate. They not only teach this powerfully by example, but along with this leffon, they actually excite, ftrengthen, and improve into habits, the virtuous paffions they recommend; and, on the other hand, they fill the mind with terror of the confequences that may refult from indulgence of the oppofite paffions, which they wifh to difcourage. Human genius could not have devifed a more captivating and effectual method of teaching and fupporting virtue.

It is no good argument againft the utility of epic and dramatic compofitions, to affert that they are unneceffary, and that the real calamities of life, if we will confider and improve them, are fufficient to inculcate every moral leffon which can be taught by the additional aid of fiction. If this argument prove any thing, it proves too much. It would fuperfede the ufe of the moralift as well as the poet. Moft of the arguments of the former, at leaft his beft ones, are drawn from experience; thofe calamities that are frequently the fruit of the follies and vices againft which he declaims, and which, if we pleafed, we might obferve and improve as well as

he. But we do not obferve and improve them, and therefore we need his admonitions. In like manner, we confider not nor improve the pathetic incidents of life, and therefore we need much the art of the tragic and epic poets to attract our attention to them.

But the art of the epic and tragic poets would be extremely circumfcribed, were they limited to the exhibition of the real incidents of life. They might indeed find topics on which to moralize, but they would encounter few events to agitate the paffions, in order to ftrengthen them, and to engage them in the caufe of virtue. The real incidents of life are too common, or too fhocking, or too naked of circumftances, to accomplifh this end. It would be impoffible, by the beft exertions of the moft vigorous genius, to communicate to them fufficient importance, dignity, or intereft. To excite, then, the paffions, and to improve the heart, epic and tragic poets muft have recourfe to imagination, to fupply the deficiency of experience. They feize on fome real event, which ferves as a ground-work to their operations, and they add, from the field of fiction, all thofe interefting and important incidents that may effectually inculcate their moral leffon, and engage the heart to purfue it.

An immenfe field now prefents itfelf to thefe eminent artifts, and they have it entirely under their command. If they procure not a ftory alto-

gether fitted to their purposes, they have themselves to blame, for they are limited only by the boundaries of impossibility and absurdity, beyond which surely they would not chuse to pass. Whatever is practicable and probable they may suppose to happen, and they may throw into the same fable as many interesting incidents as are necessary to accomplish the end in view.

Thus far the theory of epic poetry and tragedy is the same. Both pretend to teach some important moral, and to engage the passions in the performance of it; or at least to improve the heart, by exalting and strengthening virtuous affection. Both have recourse to imagination to accomplish these purposes; or, to the authority and probability of some real events, they superadd all those circumstances which imagination can suggest, as proper to impress, to rouse, and to agitate the heart. Here, however, these kinds of poetry take different routes. Their ends, their actions, their characters, and their styles, are different, and, for that reason, I must now separate them, and treat of them apart. I begin with epic poetry.

Whatever is great, magnanimous, or sublime, is the object of epic poetry. It proposes to enlarge and exalt the mind, by the contemplation of all that is grand in nature, or heroic in human sentiment and action. It means to recommend and to nourish all the great virtues which guard the hap-

pineſs of ſociety, and dignify the ſoul of man. It tends ſtrenuouſly to counteract the moſt powerful propenſity of our nature, to concentrate all our views, deſires, and actions, within the narrow circle of ourſelves. It is calculated, accordingly, for forming patriots and heroes, and for prompting and promoting all thoſe noble conceptions which exalt and elevate mankind neareſt to ſuperior orders of intelligent beings.

From this view of the object of epic poetry, it is eaſy to deduce the nature of the capital parts of which it conſiſts, which are divided by Ariſtotle, and after him by all the critics, into the action or fable, the manners or characters, the ſentiments, and the ſtyle. What I intend to advance on each of theſe heads at preſent will be general only. I ſhall make particular application when I diſcuſs the reſpective merits of the principal epic poets, ancient and modern.

The fable is the ſtory the poet relates to inculcate his moral, and to excite the paſſions he wiſhes to inſpire. It muſt contain a train of important and pathetic events to rouſe the paſſions, and theſe events muſt all point to one main end, to inculcate the moral. If the events were ever ſo great and intereſting, yet if they are not connected and dependent upon one another, they will loſe their power of exciting the paſſions, and they will not concur to recommend any general principle or moral. They muſt alſo be conſiderable in number.

A very few incidents might raiſe a tranſitory and violent paſſion, but they would be inſufficient for operating that powerful effect which the epic poet is ambitious to accompliſh. The mind of the reader muſt have time to vibrate. The paſſions muſt be excited ſlowly, but with perſeverance, and they muſt continue to ſwell till they reach the full and ſtrong tide of complete agitation. But this end cannot be attained without a train of great events, aſcending one above another in intereſt and dignity. The concurrence of all the incidents toward making one impreſſion, or inculcating one moral principle, is called by the critics the unity of the action; the variety and riſing dignity of the train of events, are called by Ariſtotle the magnitude of the action, which he farther explains, by telling us that it ſhould have a beginning, a middle, and an end.

One can ſcarcely forbear ſmiling at the unmeaning nature of a definition of which this great critic ſeems to be fond, and the reverence with which many ſucceeding critics have received it, as if it contained ſomething ingenious and inſtructive. If he meant a great action of the kind I have deſcribed, why did he not ſay ſo? Why would he uſe ambiguous phraſeology, that may apply to the action of any performance, as well as to that of an epic poem? Every fable of Æſop has a beginning, a middle, and an end, as well as the Iliad. But to

prevent objections, and display his discernment, he thinks it proper to define the meaning of the words *beginning*, *middle*, and *end*; and he informs us with much gravity, and very much to our edification, that the beginning has nothing before it, the end has nothing after it, but the middle has something both before and after it. I could not help exposing this solemn trifling of so great a critic, both to convince you that the most eminent men have their failings and their errors, and to reprehend that blind veneration for ancient authors which some moderns entertain, without distinguishing between their beauties and their faults.

It is not sufficient to constitute unity of action, that a poem contain the events of one war, or the life of one man; the former is the unity of history, the latter that of biography; of both which it is impossible to make all the incidents point towards one principle or moral. If Homer, instead of restricting the fable of the Iliad to one great event and its consequences, namely, the resentment of Achilles against Agamemnon, and the effects of it on the success of the war, had undertaken to sing the whole Siege of Troy, he would have composed, not an epic poem, but a history in verse. It would have been destitute of unity of action, and of all the poetical enthusiasm to which that species of composition gives scope. He has conducted his work with much more ability and address. He has

chosen a most important political principle, in which the happiness of all Greece was deeply concerned, namely, that contentions among the chiefs of confederate states are ruinous to their common operations, as the great lesson he has to inculcate, or as the object to which all his incidents were intended to point; and he has illustrated that principle by a long train of great and interesting events, in every one of which the bad effects of divided counsels, or of the resentment of Achilles, are conspicuously displayed. The fable, accordingly, has all the unity and magnitude that can be desired. Every incident bears upon the centre, and every succeeding incident is more dignified and important than the preceding. The passions of the reader are more deeply engaged as he proceeds. He receives the strongest impressions of the useful instruction intended to be taught; his virtuous dispositions are excited, fortified, and refined.

An epic poem is partly narrative, and partly dramatic. The narrative includes the portion which the poet relates in his own name; or which, to add dignity, he invokes his muse to relate. In the dramatic part the poet appears, and introduces his characters to deliberate and to debate. Great transactions must always be intermixed with important deliberations. In the latter, the poet has an opportunity of displaying the power of his eloquence, the grandeur of his views and sentiments,

and his capacity for adapting his ſentiments and language to the characters that utter them.

Deliberations and achievements are the grand objects in an epic poem, and they are all the means neceſſary to carry on any great action. But among theſe ſplendid events, and important ſcenes, there muſt be ſome intervals of reſpite. Deliberation and heroic action cannot occupy the whole time of the fable; the characters muſt be allowed ſome ſeaſons for repoſe, and even for amuſement. Epic poetry, to engage attention with a conſtant ſucceſſion of varied and magnificent ideas, has contrived a method of occupying uſefully even theſe intervals, by the introduction of what are called Epiſodes. Theſe are amuſing or inſtructive relations of great tranſactions, which make no part of the main action, but are connected with the characters, and illuſtrate their ſentiments and conduct. They improve the impreſſion of the principal ſubject, becauſe they coincide with the tone of the reigning diſpoſition it inculcates, and they add, beſides, the variety of hiſtory to the unity of poetry. Thus Homer, in deſcribing the effects of the anger of Achilles on the tranſactions of the Greeks, which occupied only a ſhort period of the war, has found means to communicate information of the greater part of the important events which took place during the ten years of the ſiege.

I have now given an account of every ingredient

of the fable of an epic poem, as far as it relates to the human actors. But the grandeur of this ſpecies of poetry is not ſatisfied with the moſt illuſtrious exhibitions of human power; it muſt engage all the inviſible and ſuperipr agents in nature, and gods and ſpirits muſt act in it important parts. The interference of theſe ſupernatural beings is what the critics call machinery. Thus heaven and earth appear intereſted in carrying on the deſign of the epic poet. The magnificence of his operations attracts the attention of all intelligent beings. Men and gods ſeem to forget all other operations in nature, and to remain in anxious ſuſpenſe till his illuſtrious enterpriſe ſhall reach a concluſion.

Though ſuch interpoſition of ſuperior agents may be ſuppoſed to detract from the merit of human actions, and may diminiſh the efficacy and utility of the moral experience to be attained from example, were men permitted to exert their powers without controul; yet it is perfectly conſiſtent with the vulgar ſyſtem of theology all over the world; and an exhibition of heroic action, deſtitute of ſuch interpoſition, would appear unnatural and imperfect. On extraordinary and ſtriking occaſions, the minds of the leaſt enthuſiaſtic of the human race are ſtrongly impreſſed with ſentiments of Providence; but, on ſuch occaſions, the minds of the vulgar diſcern nothing elſe; they will ſcarcely admit the propriety of employing the neceſſary means. The

gay, pleasant, and tolerating religion of antiquity, prompted the faith of a multiplicity of gods and goddesses, supreme and subordinate, not less numerous than Homer has represented them. Every nation, city, wood, river, hill, society, individual, had their favourite deities. Persons attached themselves to the worship of those they approved, and from them they expected in return countenance and protection. With the most sincere gratitude, they ascribed their merit or their success to their guardian gods; they accounted for their misfortunes by having offended them.

Hence it appears that Homer is not reprehensible for introducing his gods and goddesses with frequency and familiarity on every important occasion, and for endowing them with the greater part of the frailties, partialities, and passions of mortals. However exalted his own opinions might be, he would not so far misrepresent the religious sentiments of his countrymen, as to exhibit them more refined than they were. Had he done so, he would not faithfully have painted their characters and manners. His poems could not have been so much relished and admired. His machinery, then, is not the work of fancy, nor introduced merely to prompt wonder and amazement, though it has much of that appearance to a modern reader, who rejects his creed as fabulous, and who entertains more respectful conceptions of the Providence of

Heaven. It displays such an interference of superior beings as the rude ages of Greece certainly believed took place at the ever-memorable and unparalleled siege of Troy. It exhibits those illustrious achievements which all the Greeks were persuaded their heroes performed, partly by their own valour, but chiefly by the eminent aid they received from the great and divine agents, the gods and goddesses, to whom they reared temples, and offered sacrifices all their lives.

All epic poets have introduced machinery, but the moderns are not a little unfortunate in this article. If they assume ancient subjects, they employ the theology of antiquity, but they deprive their poems of all the authority and credibility which would naturally attend the belief of that system. If they have recourse to the Christian theology, as Milton has done even to constitute his action, they tread on dangerous ground. The exceeding dignity and sublimity of this faith, renders it unsuitable even to epic poetry. To assign character, and words, and actions, to the persons of the Trinity, and to introduce them with familiarity into human transactions, however solemn and magnificent, will savour of presumption, with which many readers will be apt to be shocked. The greater part of modern poets have accordingly avoided this plan, and have rather chosen to take hold of the superstition of their countrymen. They have contrived

a machinery of ſpirits, wizards, and ghoſts; beings who, though deſtitute of the dignity and amiableneſs of the ancient deities, yet are objects of the faith of a great part of the human race, and poſſeſs a ſolemnity from the influence of which the moſt philoſophic minds ſometimes are not entirely diveſted. Taſſo, Camœens, Voltaire, Arioſto, have employed this ſpecies of machinery.

The proper diſplay of all this ſplendid apparatus, human and divine, neceſſarily extends an epic poem to a conſiderable length in point of time, and the variety and importance of the operations often demand a large theatre in point of ſpace. The unities of time and place, which are applicable to tragedy in a ſenſe not very extenſive, muſt be liberally interpreted in the conſtruction of epic poetry. But ſtrict attention alſo to theſe unities, is leſs neceſſary in a performance which is to be read, than in one which is to be repreſented. The repreſentation recalls the improbability of an action, if it be ſuppoſed to occupy longer time, or more ſpace, than it actually does. But, in reading particularly, if it meet with interruptions, we can more readily imagine any time to run, or ſpace to be filled, which the poet ſhall require. The practice of epic poets, accordingly, is very different relative to theſe unities. Homer diſpatches the buſineſs of the Iliad in forty-ſeven days, and the theatre of the action

ſcarcely extends beyond the neighbourhood of Troy. The Odyſſey occupies fifty days, if we count from the time Ulyſſes left the iſland of Calypſo; but the ſcene is extenſive, partly by ſea, and partly by land. Æneas firſt appears on the coaſt of Sicily in the Æneid, and from that time to the death of Turnus, one year and ſeven months intervene. The ſcene is of great extent, comprehending the voyage from Sicily to Carthage, and thence to Latium, beſides the military operations in the territory of Latium.

In forming an epic fable, it is of much conſequence to connect it as much as poſſible with known events and names, and to preſerve probability in the nature and arrangement of the incidents which ſhall be added from invention. It ſhould poſſeſs all the authority of tradition, if not of hiſtory, which can be mingled with many circumſtances neceſſarily feigned. The ground-work ſhould not be too well known, otherwiſe the mixture of fiction will be apparent and ſhocking; and, for this reaſon, it can ſcarcely be taken with advantage from hiſtory. It ſhould not, at the ſame time, be leſs known, or more remote, than will admit the introduction of fiction, becauſe it will loſe the dignity and credibility which reſult from a connection of events generally known and believed to be true. Lucan and Voltaire have not attended to this rule; both have choſen ſubjects from hiſtory well

known, and of no diſtant date. Their ſucceſs, however, has not been ſuch as to encourage imitation, or to juſtify their choice. Every reader, I believe, feels the impropriety of their conduct. It may, however, be objected, that the Pharſalia of Lucan is not an epic poem; but of this I ſhall ſpeak hereafter.

As the object of epic poetry is to inſpire the reader with the moſt exalted conceptions of human merit, characters moſt illuſtrious for generous ſentiments and heroic achievements, are beſt adapted to accompliſh this end. They ſhould poſſeſs thoſe noble and ſhining qualities which conſtitute the patriot and the hero. They ſhould be as numerous and various as poſſible, and they ſhould preſerve a perfect conſiſtency in all their actions and ſentiments. All theſe requiſites are indiſpenſably neceſſary to enſure the probability of the compoſition, and, of courſe, to promote the inſtruction and entertainment of the reader. But the characters will be farther illuſtrated by the conſideration of the ſentiments, the third ingredient of an epic fable.

All the ſuperior beings, alſo, ſhould have characters aſſigned them, and a ſimilar conſiſtency ſhould appear in their ſentiments and actions. The poet may form the characters as he ſhall judge pro-

per, but after having formed them, he must be attentive to preserve them.

> " ——— Servetur ad imum
> Qualis ab incepto processerit et sibi constet."

The chief instruction, however, and example, are to be derived from the sentiments and conduct of the human actors; and, for this reason, it is of the utmost consequence that they should be strongly and distinctly delineated. Hence appears the impropriety of the allegorical personages whom even the capital poets have not hesitated to introduce. Homer has allegorized prayers, Virgil fame, and Milton sin and death. The beauty of these personifications, and the moral lesson they inculcate, are bad arguments for the use of them. They present no imitable example, and they are of the worst tendency towards undeceiving the reader, and preventing the operation of the poetical illusion. He feels they are the fictions of imagination, and when he hardly believes, no insinuation could be more unfortunate. Aristotle * divides manners, by which characters are often strongly marked, into four kinds, good χρηστα, suitable αρματτοντα, similar ὁμοια, uniform ὁμαλα. By good, he understands not virtuous, but genuine manners, which denote real sentiments; by suitable, manners which correspond

* Arist. De Art. Poet.

to ſtation, ſex, or age; by ſimilar, peculiarities of manners, derived from conſtitution, education, or country; by uniform, conſiſtent manners. Theſe diviſions are certainly acute and ingenious, but I think it may be doubted whether they throw much light upon the ſubject, and whether they are not too minute and refined.

LECTURE XLIX.

EPIC POETRY—SENTIMENTS—DICTION.

THE Sentiments were the third branch of the ingredients of epic poetry of which I proposed to treat. They are the thoughts which the poet puts in the mouth of his characters in speeches; or which he makes them display by their actions; or, finally, which he expresses himself, in those parts of the poem that are not dramatic.

Their first characteristic is, to coincide with the tone of the composition. They should exhibit something elevated and magnificent, and should never discover meanness or vulgarity. As the purpose of epic poetry is to exalt and enlarge the mind, it must present great and noble actions, suggested and accompanied by great and noble sentiments. Heroes should feel and speak, as well as act, like great men. They should appear superior

to the little interefts, partialities, and purfuits of ordinary minds. Their conceptions fhould difplay a dignity and magnanimity fuitable to their conduct.

We muft not, however, imagine, that elevated fentiments can proceed only from characters perfectly virtuous. Thefe are not the beft examples from which to learn wifdom, becaufe the reader confiders them as beings fuperior to his imitation, and as demi-gods, rather than men. Heroifm and magnanimity are the offspring of ftrong paffions, rather than of cool virtue. A hero of perfect virtue is almoft a contradiction in terms; at leaft he is a character the world feldom fees, and is not proper either for epic poetry or for tragedy. Horace, perhaps with fome feverity, ftigmatizes the heroes of the Iliad with the opprobrious name of fools.

> "Fabula qua Paridis propter narratur amorem,
> Græcia Barbariæ lento collifa duello,
> Stultorum regum, et populorum continet æftus."

The fame poet paints the capital hero of that work, not only as not perfect, but, on the contrary, as contaminated with not a few reprehenfible qualities.

> ——"Honoratum fi forte reponis Achillem;
> Impiger, iracundus, inexorabilis, acer,
> Jura neget fibi nata, nihil non arroget armis."

Perfect virtue retains too much command over the ſtronger paſſions, to ſupply that ardour and enthuſiaſm, that contempt of danger and death, which conſtitute the genuine hero.

Neither muſt we conclude, becauſe the ſentiments ſhould be magnanimous, that the hero muſt think and ſpeak nothing like ordinary men. Even heroes on common occaſions are not diſtinguiſhable from other men. It is the capacity of admitting the elevation of mind which reſults from generous ſentiments, that conſtitutes the character. No human being can continually preſerve that elevation. Though the poet who follows nature will never permit his hero to degenerate into vulgarity, either in ſentiment or conduct, yet he will artfully lower his appearance on common occaſions, that he may more effectually aggrandize it by contraſt on others which ſummon the exertion of all his noble qualities. On common occaſions he is ſimple and unaffected, both in ſentiments and language, becauſe he diſdains to attract admiration, or even reſpect, by means within the reach of ordinary men.

Sentiments, farther, ſhould be adapted to the perſonages, and to the ſituations in which they appear. This is a delicate and a difficult branch of the poet's art. Nothing diſtinguiſhes men more than the peculiarities of their views and opinions in different circumſtances. Their minds, perhaps,

are not lefs variably conftructed than their faces; and even when their opinions coincide, they feldom proceed from views and defires exactly the fame. The poet muft catch thefe characteriftic tinges which fo manifeftly difplay themfelves in life, and which, when delineated with addrefs, become a moft powerful fource of credibility. Not only muft the different perfonages explain and reafon, magnify and diminifh, refute and inflame, but they muft perform all thefe operations in a manner fuitable to the different characters they fuftain. In common poets, none of thefe peculiarities are to be found. Every character delivers his fentiments in the fame manner, or rather the author exhibits his own manner, in every one of them. Homer, as I fhall afterwards remark, is confpicuous for this delicate conformity of fentiments to character and circumftances. In this poet, the names of the fpeakers are almoft unneceffary to point out their fpeeches. Peculiarities of fentiment, and even in the choice and arrangement of words, are often fufficient to diftinguifh them.

Sentiments, alfo, fhould poffefs dignity and propriety, and fhould reject all falfe pomp, all quaintnefs and affectation. Accommodation to character and circumftances, regards the manner of conceiving and expreffing fentiments. The dignity and propriety of which I intend now to fpeak, relate to

sentiments, independent of every external consideration. There is a difference so material between these two species of merit, that some poets possess high eminence in the latter, who have little praise to claim in respect of the former. Virgil is an example. He is justly celebrated for the dignity and propriety of his sentiments. No author deviates less into bombast, quaintness, or affectation, yet scarcely any epic poet displays less characteristic excellence. Dignity and propriety of sentiment are the offspring of a vigorous invention, directed by sound judgement and correct taste. The first furnishes a plentiful store of sentiments; the two last direct the poet in a proper selection of those which are most pertinent and magnificent. False sublime is the product of a wild and extravagant imagination, not directed by judgement, nor guided by taste. Quaintness and affectation infer both deficiency of taste and sterility of imagination. They are the offspring of a feeble genius, which labours to produce something eminent, but which substitutes forced comparisons, or nice conceits, in place of the sound and strong sentiments of nature.

It only remains to remark concerning the sentiments of epic poetry, that though dignity and grandeur are their ruling tone, yet they are frequently susceptible of a high degree of the pathetic. All the more violent passions are nearly allied, and the mind prone to any one of them readily admits

the influence of the reſt. Even heroiſm is not inconſiſtent with the ſenſibility that melts the heart at a tale of woe. The coward only is unfeeling. The ſoul of the hero is ſeldom more exalted than it is compaſſionate; he is a lion in the field, in the intercourſe of ſociety he is the rival of the dove.

Diction was the laſt general quality of which I propoſed to treat, and it is eaſy to conceive that it ſhould poſſeſs every ſpecies of elegance. It ſhould be expreſſive, perſpicuous, dignified, and highly ornamented. No meanneſs, no vulgarity, no ambiguity ſhould appear. The verſification ſhould be energetic and melodious.

This is the general deſcription of the diction, but different circumſtances will require modifications ſuitable to their nature. Magnificent and ſublime ſcenes reject much ornament; though they cannot admit vulgarity, yet they will be beſt expreſſed in ſimple and conciſe language. Grand ſentiments diſplay their genuine dignity without the pomp of words; to pretend to adorn them may render them pretty, but it will diminiſh the ſublime. Particular characters, in like manner, admit a ſtyle more or leſs ornamented, correſpondent to their ages, expectations, and ſituations.

The univerſal practice of antiquity declares in favour of hexameter, as the verſification beſt ſuited to heroic poetry. The Engliſh have adopted blank

verſe. The French and Italians employ rhyme, ſometimes even proſe.

The ancient hexameter poſſeſſes great dignity, and is more melodious than any other ſingle verſe, ancient or modern. Indeed, no modulation of articulate ſounds can eaſily be ſuppoſed more dignified and muſical than the verſification of Homer and Virgil. It was, however, unfortunate that this ſtately line is ſo uniform in its cadence. Every verſe furniſhes nearly the ſame circuit of ſound, which in a long work becomes not only tireſome, but even diſagreeable.

To underſtand this remark, it muſt be obſerved, that there is a pauſe and a ſemi-pauſe in the hexameter line. If it be read without theſe pauſes, or if it be ſo conſtructed that they cannot be obſerved, and the meaning properly exhibited, its melody is in a great meaſure deſtroyed. The pauſe takes place after the fifth long ſyllable from the beginning, counting two ſhort ſyllables equal to one long, and the ſemi-pauſe takes place after the eighth long ſyllable, counting in the ſame manner.

"Arma virumque cano, Trojæ qui primus ab oris."

The uniformity of theſe pauſes produces the monotony. They fall almoſt invariably after the ſame ſyllables, and of courſe the ſame cadence uniformly

returns upon the ear. Were it not for this circumſtance, the verſe had been the moſt elegant and pleaſant that ever was employed by a poet.

Blank verſe is the only meaſure which, in point of melody, has any pretenſions to rival hexameter; and though it is certainly much inferior in the modulation of a ſingle line, yet it poſſeſſes a variety in its cadences, which renders it not leſs agreeable, perhaps, in a long work.

A blank verſe line has only one pauſe, but it is ſuſceptible of four capital poſitions, and occaſionally of three more. The moſt frequent pauſes take place after the fourth, the fifth, the ſixth, and the ſeventh ſyllables; of which the following lines are examples.

The pauſe after the fourth ſyllable:

"When Adam wak'd, ſo cuſtom'd, for his ſleep
Was airy light, from pure digeſtion bred."

The pauſe after the fifth ſyllable:

"Her hand ſoft touching, whiſper'd thus. Awake,"

"Heaven's laſt beſt gift, my ever new delight."

The pauſe after the ſixth ſyllable:

"My faireſt, my eſpous'd, my lateſt found."

"Mild as when Zephyrus on Flora breathes."

The pauſe after the ſeventh ſyllable:

"How nature paints her colours, how the bee"

"Hung over her enamour'd, and beheld"

Beſides theſe, which moſt frequently occur, we find the pauſe ſometimes after the third ſyllable:

"Advancing, ſow'd the earth with orient pearl,"

Sometimes after the ſecond ſyllable:

"Awake, the morning ſhines, and the freſh field
Calls us; we loſe the prime to mark how ſpring"

Sometimes after the eighth ſyllable:

"Whence true authority in men; though both"

Theſe changes of the pauſes communicate greater variety of cadence to the blank verſe line than is poſſeſſed by any other, and fit it particularly for ſuch a long work as an epic poem. Beſides, as it conſiſts almoſt entirely of Iambic feet, it is naturally the moſt ſolemn and ſtately verſification in our language.

The French heroic meaſure appears to us extremely imperfect, both on account of its rhymes, and the uniformity of its cadences. A good ear ſoon tires of the gingle of rhyme, but particularly

in a long work, and nothing is more unſuitable to the dignity and gravity of heroic poetry. But the French verſe is not leſs unfortunate in its pauſes than in its rhymes. They conſtantly ſucceed one another after the ſame ſyllable, dividing the line of twelve ſyllables into two equal parts, which produces a monotony not a little unpleaſant.

I proceed to make application of theſe preliminary obſervations, by examining the productions of the principal epic poets, ancient and modern. The Iliad claims precedency, both on account of its antiquity and eminence.

Though Homer, it is probable, lived before the invention both of ſcience and of the critical art, yet he ſeems to have incurred no diſadvantage on that account. He diſplays as great correctneſs and good taſte as if his compoſition had been the offspring of much reading and experience, and of much obſervation of a refined age. He is as complete in the conſtruction of his fable, as if he had been acquainted with all the critical knowledge of Ariſtotle. But though Homer lived in an early age, he was not altogether deſtitute of thoſe favourable circumſtances which produce great poets. Intereſt had not yet debaſed and circumſcribed the hearts of men, and poetical ſongs, which delineated noble achievements, were the admiration and delight of all orders of ſociety. No record exiſted but tradition; the bard was the hiſtorian and the inſtructor

of his countrymen, and next to the hero was the moſt conſpicuous character of his age. His poems were recited in the aſſemblies and feſtivals of the nobles, of the heroes, and of the people; and from the effect they produced on the hearers, he would learn to correct his taſte, and poliſh his ſtyle. The ſong that inflamed the imagination, and touched the heart, could only find applauſe. The ſimple, the ſublime, the pathetic, would ſolely engage attention. Affected ſentiments and falſe ornaments could encounter nothing but contempt.

He followed nature as his guide, and he could ſcarcely miſs that beſt form of his poems which ſhe ſo palpably dictates. The unity of his fable, at which we wonder ſo much, was the immediate reſult of his ambition to render it affecting and inſtructive.

Tradition alſo appears to have communicated much authority and credibility both to his incidents and characters. It ſeems to have ſuggeſted many of the moſt probable and intereſting of the former, and to have allowed him to add from invention whatever was neceſſary to complete his deſign. I am even apt to ſuſpect that his characters are chiefly taken from tradition; for, with all the greatneſs of his genius, it is difficult to conceive how they could otherwiſe have been ſo natural and ſo ſtrongly marked. He excels all poets in this charming branch of his art. He frequently delineates differ-

ent ſhades of the ſame character; and when the ruling paſſion of two heroes is the ſame, he exhibits them as men perfectly diſtinct. The wiſdom of Priam, Ulyſſes, and Agamemnon, is very diſſimilar; and although they are all famous for that quality, yet the degrees and combinations of it are different in each of them. Heroiſm is the leading characteriſtic of Achilles and the Locrian Ajax, yet the two characters are palpably diſtinguiſhed.

The ſiege of Troy was perhaps the greateſt and moſt intereſting enterprize which had occurred in the world previous to the age of Homer. It was probably the firſt expedition of the confederated arms of Greece, and it muſt have been extremely detrimental to the ſtates of that country, both on account of its diſtance and its duration. It was therefore a moſt uſeful political leſſon to teach the Greeks of future times to imitate the valour of their anceſtors, but to avoid the contentions which had rendered it ſo long unſucceſsful. It muſt alſo have been extremely grateful to the whole of the people of Greece, to celebrate the progreſs of their arms in a diſtant country, and to let the ambitious power of Aſia know, that the magnanimity and valour of their countrymen had razed the cities, and pulled down the kingdoms, of that haughty land.

But the communication of political inſtruction, however important, is not the principal object of

the Iliad. Its main deſign is to elevate our conceptions of human ſentiments and exertions, by holding up to our admiration the moſt illuſtrious heroic achievements; and the poet has admirably adapted the fabric of his fable to promote this end. He has exhibited an aſcending ſeries of achievements, and a riſing gradation of heroes. The inſult offered to Achilles in the beginning of the poem, not only conſtitutes the hinge on which the whole train of the operations is ſuſpended, but it forms an excellent expedient for withdrawing that hero from the ſcene of action, and for admitting the appearance of the inferior characters of the poem.

The operations begin with a ſingle combat between two of the meaneſt heroes of the work, the huſband and lover of Helen, Menelaus and Paris. The great Trojan hero, Hector, next appears, and triumphs ſucceſſively over many warriors of Greece. Ajax Telamon firſt preſumes to meet him, but is repulſed. Agamemnon next aſſails him, but without ſucceſs. The Locrian Ajax attacks him, and even ſlightly wounds him, but is quickly compelled to retire with the troops he conducted. Patroclus at length enters the liſt, arrayed in the armour of Achilles, which, the poet artfully inſinuates, as a compliment to that hero, might intimidate Hector. But Hector was as much ſuperior to every other hero as Achilles was to him. He ſcatters the Grecian army, kills Patroclus the friend of Achilles,

and ſtrips him of the armour of that champion. Every reaſon now concurred to produce the appearance of Achilles; to convince the Greeks of the error of Agamemnon in affronting him; to avenge the death of Patroclus; and to diſplay the greatneſs of his own valour. The poet prepares him for the field with the greateſt parade, and in his new armour made by Vulcan. To all which is added, that the expectations of the reader have been excited and highly elevated by the conſtant hints he received of his irreſiſtible courage during the progreſs of the work. Achilles finally comes forth the higheſt effort of the imagination of the poet; and ſo dreadful was his appearance, that the great Hector, who had vanquiſhed every other combatant of Greece, durſt not abide his approach, but fled with precipitation to hide himſelf within the walls of Troy. He at laſt, however, recollects his character and former achievements, and ſummons all his fortitude and ſtrength to meet his antagoniſt. The arm of Achilles eaſily prevails, and lays the Trojan hero in the duſt.

This exquiſite contrivance for elevating the conceptions of the reader by a riſing ſucceſſion of heroic deeds, and an aſcending ſeries of heroes, Homer derived from the nature of his fable; and it is a ſpecies of merit which no other epic poem poſſeſſes ſo completely as the Iliad. Æneas gains little acceſſion

to his character, either for wifdom or heroifm, during the progrefs of the Æneid. Adam and Eve, inftead of exalting our conceptions of their conduct in the courfe of Paradife Loft, afford abundant reafons for entertaining a contrary opinion. Had not the nature of the fable of the Iliad permitted the ingenious author to detain his favourite hero fo long from the field of action, and at the fame time enabled him to infinuate his importance, by conftant intimations of his abfence, he could not have excited fo effectually the expectations of the reader, nor gratified them fo fully by his actual appearance.

"Through blood, through death, Achilles ftill proceeds,
O'er flaughter'd heroes and o'er rolling fteeds.
As when avenging flames, with fury driven,
On guilty towns exert the wrath of Heaven;
The pale inhabitants, fome fall, fome fly,
And the red vapours purple all the fky:
So rag'd Achilles; death and dire difmay,
And toils, and terrors, fill'd the dreadful day."

It is with regret I remark, that fimilar merit is not difcernible in the reprefentations of the inferior combatants of the poem, the Greek and Trojan armies. The defcriptions of their battles are too minute, and not a little tirefome. They occupy near a third part of the poem, and they are little elfe than a catalogue of wounds. Notwithftanding all the

efforts of a lively imagination, to diverſify them by frequent and picturesque digreſſions, concerning the country, the family, or the hopes of a warrior ſlain, ſtill they are deſtitute of intereſt, and the reader cannot eaſily ſupport his attention.

I would alſo reprehend the manners of Homer's heroes, did I not recollect that it is unjuſt to try them by a ſcale derived from a more civilized age. The groſſneſs of the reproach with which Achilles and Agamemnon attack one another in the aſſembly of the Greeks, the familiarity of the domeſtic employments in which even the princes of the people are frequently engaged, and the wanton ferocity of Achilles in dragging the dead body of Hector round the walls of Troy, are all pictures of rude ſociety, rather than marks of erroneous judgement. The poet could not paint manners of which he had no experience. He would have miſrepreſented his age, at leaſt the age of his heroes, had he imputed to it the cultivation of an age more refined. The introduction of humanity into war is one of the lateſt improvements of poliſhed ſociety, and it requires a conſiderable degree of civilization not to hate the perſon of an enemy.

The religious opinions, alſo, of the Greeks, concur to explain the treatment of the body of Hector. The manes of a hero were ſuppoſed to be diſſatisfied and unhappy, till ample revenge had been inflicted

on the enemy who killed him. The treatment of Hector was perhaps considered as a proper retaliation for stripping the body of Patroclus of the arms of Achilles.

Homer discovers equal eminence in the sentiments of his characters as in the delineations of their actions. Agamemnon, Achilles, Ulysses, Nestor, not only display a natural, strong, and persuasive eloquence, but thoughts and elocution characteristic of themselves. The nervous, resolute, and abrupt manner of Achilles is highly descriptive of his impetuosity and courage, while the age and loquacity of Nestor are beautifully pictured in his speeches. The dignity and haughtiness of Agamemnon are discernible in his sentiments and style. The artifice and insinuation of Ulysses are distinguishable by the same means.

But the most conspicuous examples of dignity and sublimity are his exhibitions of the gods, many of which he has finished with a masterly pencil. Jupiter frequently appears in all the magnificence of a superior deity, especially when he assumes the majesty of the father of gods and men.

——" He spoke, and awful bends his sable brow,
Shook his ambrosial curls, and gave the nod,
The stamp of fate, and sanction of the god;
High heaven with trembling the dread signal took,
And all Olympus to the centre shook."

Minerva arming herſelf for battle in favour of the Greeks, exhibits a noble and ſtriking figure. Apollo leading on the Trojans forms a picture formidable and ſplendid. But the deſcription of Neptune ſhaking heaven and earth with his trident is highly ſublime. I ſhall conclude this branch of the ſubject with the judgement of Quinctilian concerning the ſentiments of Homer:

"Hunc nemo, in magnis ſublimitate, in parvis proprietate, ſuperaverit. Idem lætus ac preſſus, jucundus et gravis; tum copia tum brevitate mirabilis; nec poetica modo, ſed oratoria virtute eminentiſſimus. Nam ut de laudibus taceam, nonne vel nonus liber, quo miſſa ad Achillem legatio continetur; vel in primo, inter duces illa contentio; vel dictæ in ſecundo ſententiæ; omnes litium ac conſiliorum explicant artes? Affectus quidem vel illos mites, vel hos concitatos, nemo erit tam indoctus, qui non, in ſua poteſtate, hunc auctorem habuiſſe fateatur."

LECTURE L.

EPIC POETRY—HOMER.

THE views I have hitherto exhibited of Homer have chiefly contributed to difplay his judgement and his fenfibility; thofe I am to mention will tend principally to difcover the vigour of his imagination, and the correctnefs of his tafte. I mean now to illuftrate the eminence of his defcriptive powers, and the merit of his diction.

His defcriptive powers are exerted either in delineations of domeftic, deliberative, or warlike fcenes, or in pictures of nature, which appear chiefly in his comparifons. His paintings often communicate more lively fenfations than the actual contemplation of the objects. He feizes thofe ftriking and picturefque circumftances which make the deepeft impreffion. He never introduces general terms, or loads a picture with unmeaning epithets.

The reader forgets both the poet and the expreſſion. His attention is arreſted by the figure, and he feels it to be a copy of nature. Many examples might be produced, and the reader cannot open his poems without diſcovering them.

The domeſtic ſcene between Hector and Andromache, in the ſixth book, is finiſhed with the moſt happy colouring. Andromache reminds her huſband of the importance of his life to the felicity both of herſelf and of his ſon; that all her relations were extinct, and that miſery muſt attend her and Aſtyanax if he ſhould be ſlain. She preſſes him to remain in ſafety in the city, or to act with caution when he ſhould venture to the field. The hero replies, that his character demanded his appearance in war, and that even the happineſs of his family muſt not involve him in diſgrace; that his ſole ambition was to defend his country and his friends, and that no miſery compatible with his reputation could ſo much oppreſs him as the thoughts of their calamity. After this affectionate dialogue, the ſcene is ſhifted to their infant ſon, who remained in the arms of an attendant, and who, frightened at the armour of his father, ſhrinks from his embrace into the boſom of the nurſe. The hero ſmiles, throws his helmet on the ground, careſſes him, and having devoutly prayed to Jupiter to make him a greater hero than his father, returns him into the arms of his mother! It is impoſſible to imagine a

more natural and delicate picture; the reader could not have obtained more lively conceptions from inspection, than he receives from the description.

The comparisons of Homer do equal honour to the vigour of his imagination. No figure was ever more happily conceived and applied, than that which is supposed to have occurred to Priam on the first view of Achilles, clad in his new armour made by Vulcan. The old King, anxious for the fate of his people and of his son, compares this dreadful hero to "the star Orion, which rises in autumn, and outshines all luminaries, but was of dreadful portent; it threatened pestilence on earth, and the downfall of kingdoms *."

When Patroclus weeps for the destruction of the heroes of his country, whom Achilles would not defend, the latter tells him in derision, "that he cried like an infant catching hold of its mother, and pressing to be taken into her arms †."

I have specified these comparisons, because they are of different kinds, and will afford matter for some observation. The former, like many others in Homer, possesses much dignity; it adorns the subject it is brought to illustrate, and derives a characteristic beauty from the feelings of the person by whom it is employed. The new armour formed by Vulcan shone with all the splendour of

* Iliad, lib. xxiii. † Ib. lib. xvi.

the ſtar, but the formidable appearance of the hero was no leſs portentous than the awful ſplendour of the luminary.

The other compariſon applied to Patroclus will be ſuppoſed to partake of lowlineſs or familiarity, qualities which ſome critics have been forward to diſcover in the ſimiles of Homer. That the compariſon is familiar, I admit, but it was intended that it ſhould be ſo. Achilles wiſhed to juſtify his coolneſs and obſtinacy, notwithſtanding the calamities of his countrymen, and the earneſt ſupplications of Patroclus. Accordingly, with the utmoſt propriety in this view, he attacks the lamentations of that hero with irony, and compares the unmanlineſs of his behaviour to the peeviſhneſs of an infant.

A ſimilar apology may be offered for ſeveral other compariſons of Homer, ſuch as "thoſe of the flight of cranes," and the "ſwarms of flies," which have been cenſured for want of dignity. Had they had more dignity, they would not have ſuited the deſign of the poet; he intended them to vilify and to diminiſh; had they not been familiar, they would not have anſwered theſe ends.

It may be farther urged, that dignity is an occaſional, rather than a permanent quality. It depends on time, place, and manners, ſo that an operation, or an object, may be abundantly dignified in one period of ſociety, which will become homely and familiar in another. Homer compares a "well-

fought field to a well-poised balance, by which an œconomical matron carefully weighs her woolly store." No modern epic poet would venture to introduce such a figure, because the lowliness of the operation to which it alludes would excite disgust, if not ridicule. But where flocks and herds were the principal property of the most opulent members of the community, the operation would not be destitute of dignity. Heroes who were shepherds, and who with their own hands could prepare the produce of their flocks for the table, were not easily to be offended with a picture of any employment necessarily connected with these flocks. We may then, it would seem, conclude, that many poetical figures, which modern refinement stigmatizes as destitute of dignity, would not incur similar reprehension in the days of Homer. He could not anticipate the revolutions of manners, and therefore could not be guided by opinions which these alone could suggest.

The striking ingredients of Homeric diction are perspicuity, melody, and dignity. No author has been able to combine with poetical composition as much perspicuity. Few authors in prose have exceeded him in this article. Versification seems not in the least to incumber his expression; it flows on with the same ease as fettered by no metrical law. No affectation, no forced elevation, no abstract terms or phraseology disgrace his style, or perplex

the reader. His expreſſion is the moſt natural, ſimple, and obvious, that can be imagined. But what is ſtill more extraordinary, it is entitled to this praiſe, not only in the diſpaſſionate and narrative parts of the work, it maintains the ſame properties when it aſſumes the higheſt oratorial form, when it aſſails the paſſions, and admits the moſt animated eloquence. The melody and dignity of his diction are not leſs eminent. He ſeems to poſſeſs entire command of the language; he can ſoften it into the moſt liquid and muſical tones, or render it bold and elevated, ſo as to ſuit the ſound to the ſenſe. That the merit of his verſification is partially to be imputed to the ductility of the moſt mellifluous tongue in the world, no candid critic can heſitate to allow; but that the taſte and ear of the author prompted its numerous and delicate beauties, it is but juſtice alſo to admit. No other poet, even of the Greek tongue, appears to diſplay as much ſweetneſs and modulation. He is certainly entitled to all the praiſe due to his ſuperiority over his countrymen.

The laſt ingredient of the poetical excellence of the Iliad of which I ſhall take notice, is the animation which pervades it. Every thing partakes of life; all inanimate nature is perſonified. Darts, ſhips, trees, winds, rivers, chariots, horſes, dreams, prayers, are all inſpired with life, and endued with the characters and functions of living agents. Such

bold efforts of imagination correspond to the genius of heroic times, and of early society. When we traverse such an enchanting and magnificent field as the Siege of Troy, we do not feel that they are excessive demands. It is only when we involve ourselves in modern sentiments and manners, that the violence begins to appear, and that we suppose the flights of the poet are extravagant. The most exceptionable personifications, perhaps, in the Iliad, are, the dialogue between Achilles and his horse Xanthus, and the appearance of the god of the river Scamander, to take vengeance on that hero for having choaked his course by the bodies of the slain. The stream is supposed to pursue Achilles all over the plain, till Vulcan interferes, and compels him to return to his channel, by the influence of his "fiery blast." *Iliad*, lib. xxi.

The purpose of these bold figures was to aggrandize Achilles, by displaying his contempt of death, and the dreadful havock he made among the troops of the Trojans. That a hero should contract a strong affection for his chariot-horses, to the speed and docility of which he is so much indebted for his safety and success, is not, perhaps, a very unnatural supposition, when we consider the attachment that people familiarized with these animals often entertain for them, on account of qualities of a much inferior kind. That the hero, therefore, should address his horses as endued with reason, de-

mand the exertion of their higheſt powers, and reproach them with the death of Patroclus, though an empaſſioned apoſtrophe, is not, perhaps, very extravagant. The reply of the horſe was miraculous, and it was accompliſhed by Juno, who employed that channel to inſpire the hero with caution, by reminding him of the decree of fate, that he was to die before the walls of Troy. The power of the Queen of heaven muſt be ſuppoſed perfectly adequate to open the mouth of the horſe, and then the only inquiry that can remain will be, whether the poet did right in making the goddeſs employ that animal to convey her caution, rather than diſpatch a deity from heaven in the form of a mortal, which is the more uſual Homeric method; a diſcuſſion ſurely of a nature too frivolous to engage attention, though, I doubt not, the lovers of the marvellous will prefer the channel of the horſe.

The exiſtence of river-gods was part of the Grecian creed, and the appearance of Scamander exhibits nothing extraordinary. That he ſhould not remain neuter in ſuch a conteſt, was alſo natural, and his attempt to drown the hero was to exert his vengeance in the line moſt conſonant to his character. But as one god only could counteract the operations of another, Vulcan, a protector of the Greeks, exerts himſelf in oppoſition to Scamander, and attacks him with all his fires. In this formidable contention of the gods, the hero eſcapes.

I pretend not to maintain that what I have said is a complete vindication of Homer in some of the most exceptionable parts of his poem. He might have other reasons for his conduct, of which the knowledge is now lost. But the plausibility of what I have advanced will, perhaps, induce us to suspend our judgement, or even to believe that his reasons might be perfectly satisfactory.

That Homer, in any age possessed of the same judgement, vigour of imagination, and good taste, would have been a great poet, no doubt can exist. Neither, on the other hand, can it be doubted, that part of his fame is owing to circumstances, and that no other epic poet, perhaps, was more fortunately situated. He lived, as I have said, when heroic deeds were universally admired, and the minds of men were familiarized with magnanimous conceptions. Guided by nature and good sense, he has given to his poem that unity of action which fitted it to make the deepest impression, while the heroism and simplicity of the times guarded him against the greater part of those improprieties which often disfigure the poetry of more polished periods. He seems also to have possessed a fund of precious materials in the Siege of Troy, which no other poet ever enjoyed. All his predecessors in poetry are extinct, so that every ornament and allusion have all the charms of novelty. Tradition appears to have furnished all his characters, and, perhaps,

many of his incidents. That channel of information, alſo, has long ago been extinguiſhed, ſo that what he received from it has all the merit of his own invention. In a word, no poet might receive ſo much aid from real incidents without its being known; no poet ever lived in times more favourable to poetical exertions; and no poet poſſeſſed more real genius. Can we wonder that the Iliad has gained univerſal admiration?

The Odyſſey is a poem very different from the Iliad. Longinus contends, that it poſſeſſes only ſome faint rays of the merit of that great work. He conſiders it as the child of old age, who retains the lineaments of the parent, but inherits little of the vigour of his better days. He will have it to reſemble the ſetting ſun, who preſerves his meridian ſize and graceful appearance, but is diveſted of all his heat and ſplendour. Madame Dacier, on the contrary, will not allow the leaſt foundation for the ſtrictures of Longinus. She maintains, that the Odyſſey has all the animation, vigour, and propriety it ought to poſſeſs; that it would not have been different from what it is, had it been compoſed in the higheſt glow of genius; and that the diverſity from the Iliad in the manner of execution, is owing to the nature of the ſubject, not to the decline of the abilities of the author.

That the Odyſſey preſents many pleaſant pic-

tures of early society and natural manners, and that these are delineated with a delicate and masterly pencil, every reader of taste must allow; but he will not easily admit that the poetical merit of the poem is comparable with that of the Iliad. In respect of fable, the Odyssey deserves no praise, if it be not exposed to some censure. The travels of Telemachus, which occupy the four first books, have no relation to the action, farther than arises from the connection between a father and his son. They tend not either to promote or retard the return of that hero, and his re-establishment in his family-kingdom. Ulysses's own travels, which he recites to the Phæacians, occupy no fewer than six books; and as they cannot be considered in any other light than an episode, they bear no reasonable proportion to the rest of the work. They contain, besides, many events which savour little of the spirit of epic poetry, and they rather prompt the marvellous than the sublime. The fables of the Cyclops, Polyphemus, Circe, and the Syrens, appear more like wondrous tales to amuse children, than the splendid episodes of an epic poem. The lowliness, also, of the transactions which compose the business of the fable; the familiar conversations of Ulysses with the keepers of his cattle and flocks; his introduction to the suitors, and intercourse with them under the disguise of an aged traveller; but particularly his manual combat with Irus the va-

grant; are all incidents which we can ſcarcely perſuade ourſelves attain the dignity of epic poetry. Even the diſcovery of himſelf to Penelope ſuggeſts few of thoſe ſentiments which we might expect from the virtue and affection of the parties. She is ſuppoſed to have forgotten her huſband ſo entirely, and to be ſo cautious for fear of impoſition, that all the delicate feelings which a meeting ſo tender might naturally be ſuppoſed to inſpire, are converted into a patient unintereſting inveſtigation of the identity of his perſon.

But if, inſtead of the re-eſtabliſhment of Ulyſſes in his kingdom, we ſhall conſider the whole of his travels as conſtituting the fable of the Odyſſey, then it is deſtitute of unity, and it is no better than a hiſtory in verſe. Indeed I am of opinion, that Homer entertained this conception of the fable of the poem, that he meant the whole of the travels of his hero to be the ſubject of it, that he was ſenſible it wanted unity, and that he wiſhed as much as poſſible to conceal the defect. With this view, he commences the narration at the departure of Ulyſſes from the iſland of Calypſo, and introduces, as I have ſaid, all the travels that preceded that event by way of epiſode. This, however, is an inſignificant contrivance, unworthy of the genius of Homer. The travels could not appear with ſo much advantage in any order, as in that of the time in

which they were performed; and if the ſubject wanted unity from its nature, no arrangement could beſtow upon it that quality. To relate firſt a poſterior part of the travels, and then to go backward and introduce laſt what paſſed firſt in the order of time, conveys confuſion and obſcurity to the narration, but does not in the leaſt contribute to preſerve its unity. Homer, then, ſeems to have committed two errors in the conſtruction of the fable of the Odyſſey; firſt, in chuſing a ſeries of events which had no natural unity; and, ſecond, in endeavouring to hide that defect by the arrangement of the materials. He was led into both by attempting to compaſs purpoſes in their nature incompatible to form an epic poem of the travels of Ulyſſes, which he wiſhed to ſing. He perhaps concluded, either that few of his readers would be ſenſible of theſe imperfections, or, if they poſſeſſed as much diſcernment, that they would diſcover alſo the proper apology for his conduct.

Taking, however, the Odyſſey for a narrative or heroic poem, containing many curious incidents, which would very much attract the attention of an unpoliſhed age, no ſubject could be more happily choſen, no ſtory could be more pleaſantly told. It contains all the natural wonders of the ancient world. The Cyclops were the Patagonians of antiquity. The tales of Circe, of the Syrens, of Scylla and Charyſdis, and of the Infernal Regions,

unfolded whatever marvellous had reached the ears of men. In the Iliad, the author had excited the admiration of the reader by achievements of real valour; in the Odyſſey, he attempts to intereſt the ſame paſſions by all the wonders of fable; and, if we will allow theſe to be heroic means, we cannot deny that he has been ſucceſsful.

Admitting, then, the propriety of the author's deſign, the perfection of his fable, and the dignity of the incidents, the Odyſſey is executed with all that genius for which Madame Dacier ſo ſtrenuouſly contends, and which a much better judge, Dr Samuel Clarke, thinks actually diſplayed. Every landſcape, incident, and character, are painted in the moſt lively and glowing colours. Such, indeed, is the captivating and romantic nature of the objects, and the ſimple, credible, and beautiful phraſeology in which they are exhibited, that the reader appears to traverſe enchanted ground, to wander through the land of fancy, and to ſurvey characters and forms wonderful and ſtrange.

The deſcription of the Cyclops, ſupported by the vulgar creed of antiquity, forms a figure of dreadful contemplation. He is a horrid monſter, who lives on human fleſh, though Homer has omitted the ſhocking circumſtance inſerted by Virgil, of the quivering of the limbs of the men between his teeth while he devoured them! Much vigour of imagi-

nation is difplayed in the delineation of the picture; we regret that the merit of it is fullied by the wretched pun (ουτις, no man) which Ulyffes employs to efcape the fury of Polyphemus. It is, I believe, the only pun in Homer, and is no where fo mifplaced as in epic poetry, though other epic poets have not fcrupled to allow a place in their noble works to this meaneft of all fpecies of wit. The incident of the Cyclops fnatching up a large ftone on the fhore, and hurling it after the veffel of Ulyffes, fo as nearly to overfet her, poffeffes a degree of grandeur, if not of fublimity.

The interview of Ulyffes with Naufıcaa, daughter of Alcinous, King of the Phæacians, is a curious and fimple, though not an unpleafant picture of ancient manners.. He was fhipwrecked and thrown afhore on their ifland, and the firft perfon he encounters is Naufıcaa, iffuing from the palace with her maidens to wafh the garments of the royal family in a neighbouring ftream. He was obliged to acoft them in the miferable and naked condition in which he had been brought to land. He receives from Naufıcaa the moft complaifant reception. She provides him with clothing, oil to anoint his body, and provifions to fatisfy his hunger. She directs him to follow her to the town, but fhe could not permit him to accompany her, for fear of giving ground to illiberal reflections in point of character. Through the whole reprefentation of this luf-

cious ſcene, ſo apt to inflame the imagination, not a ſingle licentious hint appears. Nauſicaa is painted in all the philoſophy of modeſty and chaſtity. The delicacy of Ulyſſes is not inferior to the modeſty of the Princeſs.

In a word, through the whole of the Odyſſey we find much of the marvellous, many pleaſant pictures of early ſociety, and much moral ſentiment; all which were to be expected from a traveller

"Qui mores hominum multorum vidit et urbes."

LECTURE LI.

EPIC POETRY—THE ÆNEID.

IT is a matter of much importance to an epic poet to make choice of a ſubject which may engage the attention of the people to whom he addreſſes his performance, and to connect it as intimately as poſſible with the fame of their anceſtors, or with their own intereſt or reputation. Virgil has been fortunate in ſuch a choice. The origin of the Roman people was obſcure, and little correſpondent to the illuſtrious rank they held as the firſt nation of the earth at the time of Auguſtus. Nothing, therefore, could be more flattering to their vanity, than to deduce their deſcent from the famous kingdom of Troy, the fate and achievements of which were celebrated all over the world. But the aim of Virgil was not reſtricted to the conciliation of the favour of the Romans at large, it was much more circumſcribed and perſonal. It was artfully calcu-

lated to offer the moſt refined compliment to the family of the Cæſars, and particularly to the reigning Emperor, Auguſtus, by exhibiting the antiquity and dignity of his pedigree, lineally deſcended from Æneas, the great Trojan hero, whoſe wife was the daughter of King Priam, and whoſe mother was a goddeſs.

The political ſtate, alſo, of the Roman empire, concurred to add intereſt to ſuch a work. It had been found, by a ſucceſſion of civil wars the moſt deſolating and bloody which hiſtory has to record, that a free government could no longer ſubſiſt, and the beſt duty of every good citizen appeared to be, to reconcile all parties to the abſolute dominion of a ſovereign. One of the moſt effectual means of accompliſhing this end ſeemed to be, to remind the people that ſovereignty was the eſtabliſhed government of the country from which they were deſcended, and that the family exalted to the imperial diadem had a preferable claim to the poſſeſſion of that high dignity. When men are neceſſitated to ſubmit to a ſtate of life to which they are not habituated, they graſp with avidity at every repreſentation which may contribute to conciliate their minds to their condition. We know, from unqueſtionable evidence, that the Æneid was highly acceptable to the Emperor Auguſtus; and, although it inferred the irretrievable loſs of liberty, and the diſſolution of the republican form of government, yet we may

conclude, that it was not a little grateful to many of the people, who recollected with horror the disorders and enormities of that turbulent constitution.

The subject of the Æneid, then, possesses all that dignity, importance, and interest, which the critics have required to constitute an epic fable. The action it celebrates is no less than the establishment of the Trojans in Italy, and the foundation of the empire of Rome.

"Tantæ molis erat Romanam condere gentem."

The chief obstructions to the execution of the action, are the connections contracted by the hero with the Queen of Carthage; the disasters of the voyages from Sicily, where the poem opens, to Carthage, from Carthage back to Sicily, thence to Italy; and, finally, the war with Turnus and the Italians, till the marriage of Æneas with Lavinia, and the complete settlement of the Trojans in Latium. The action is perfect in point of unity, and has, besides, all the magnitude and variety that can be desired. It inculcates, however, no particular moral, or political maxim, like the Iliad. All the merit of this sort which it possesses, is the oblique recommendation of the family of the Cæsars, and its tendency to conciliate the affections of the people to the government of a sovereign, from the example of the civil constitution adopted by their

Trojan and Italian anceſtors, whoſe example demanded imitation, as they were the conſtant friends of fate and of the gods. Theſe important leſſons, I doubt not, appeared to Virgil of ſufficient public utility to recommend to his choice the ſubject of his poem; and, though they were local and occaſional, he might, perhaps, reckon them the moſt grateful and valuable doctrines he could convey.

The Æneid abounds leſs with heroic achievements, and theſe of a nature leſs ſplendid, than the Iliad. The object of Virgil ſeems to have been, to combine the capital beauties of the Iliad and the Odyſſey; the firſt ſix books, containing the voyages of Æneas, reſembling the navigations of Ulyſſes; and the laſt ſix books the war in Italy, like that of Troy. The author, by this contrivance, has thrown into his work much more variety of matter, but he has failed in exciting ſo completely the paſſion of admiration, the great object of epic compoſition.—The war between the Italians and Trojans exhibits many illuſtrious deeds of valour, and many noble ſentiments, but it attempts not to exalt our conceptions of human powers to a pitch equal to that accompliſhed in the Iliad. Turnus and Æneas are eminent heroes, but they are ſcarcely comparable with the meaneſt champions of Homer, far leſs are they to be ranked with Hector and Achilles. If, however, the heroes of Virgil are not ſo illuſtrious as thoſe of Homer, the battles of the former are not

so numerous and unentertaining as those of the latter. An inclination to avoid this palpable defect of the Iliad, probably induced Virgil to occupy so great a portion of his poem with the navigations of Æneas, sensible of the impossibility of adding variety or interest to a history of wounds, and a continued series of combats.

The first six books are the most complete and the most captivating part of the Æneid. The last six books are said not to have received the finishing polish of the author; and, it is added, that he was so conscious of their imperfections, as to order at his death the whole poem to be consigned to the flames. Though we should have had infinite reason to regret the execution of this destination of the author, yet it must be allowed that he had some cause to be dissatisfied. But it is farther remarkable, even with regard to the first six books, that the chief beauties they contain are either no part of the action, or are in their nature rather tragic than epic. The beauties I mean, are the long episode relative to the destruction of Troy, and the navigation of Æneas to the island of Sicily, which fills the second and third books; and the interesting incident of the passion of Dido, that occupies the fourth book. The demolition of Troy is the most magnificent object in the Æneid; and as it occurs so early in the poem, and is of so considerable extent, while it forms no essential part of the action,

it ſeems to make an appearance too brilliant for an epiſode, and ſenſibly to obſcure the reſt of the work. The paſſion of Dido is delineated with a maſterly hand, and does the higheſt honour to the pathetic powers of the poet. But every reader muſt be conſcious that it accords not entirely with the tone of heroic poetry. It abounds with all the fluctuation, the anxiety, and tenderneſs, natural to the tragic muſe; it ſavours little of the pomp and ſplendour which are the delight of the epic.

The greater part of the fifth book, and the whole of the ſixth, are again occupied with epiſodes, the former exhibiting an account of the funeral games in Sicily, celebrated in commemoration of Anchiſes; and the latter containing a deſcription of the infernal regions. The ſpecific merit of each of theſe books, particularly of the latter, is very conſpicuous, and diſcovers much philoſophical, mythological, and hiſtorical information, adorned with a rich vein of poetry.

But, amid ſuch a multiplicity of epiſodes, the principal action is, in a great meaſure, ſuſpended. Æneas appears to forget the chief object of his voyage, and the reader, of courſe, becomes much leſs intereſted in the ſucceſs of an adventurer who ſeems not very anxiouſly concerned about himſelf. It was certainly a little unfortunate in the conſtruction of the fable of the Æneid, that the buſineſs of the main action was ſo long concealed from view,

and that the episodes in the fifth and sixth books were not detached from one another, and the latter interspersed among the achievements of the following books. No necessity pressed the poet to introduce the descent of Æneas into the infernal regions before his arrival in Latium, except the accidental passage of Cumæ, the residence of the Sybil. He receives from her very little intelligence of the affairs of that country, but what he previously knew. He obtains even from Anchises no information which seems to have been essential to his success. The principal purpose of this episode was, to compliment, by anticipation, the most eminent families of Rome, particularly that of the Emperor; and these compliments might, perhaps, have been inserted with more propriety nearer the termination of the poem.

In respect of characters, the imperfection of the Æneid fills us with surprise. There is scarcely a Trojan who has any character, except Æneas. The faithful Achates, the brave Gyas, and the brave Cloanthus, are mere names transcribed from Homer, and inserted only to fill a vacant space; to which are added epithets so trite and indefinite, as to convey no impression of peculiar qualities. Even the character of Æneas is neither very interesting nor very amiable, and the poet unfortunately has sometimes thrown him into situations which leave us room to question both his sensibility and the good-

ness of his heart. In forming the character of his hero, Virgil is held to have been guided by political views. It is supposed that Æneas was intended to be a picture of Augustus; and the character of that Emperor, though it displayed much decency and sagacity, was not very conspicuous for many other virtues. He was moderate, decent, and religious, an encourager of arts and learning, from policy; he was apparently attached to the external forms of free government, for no other end than that he might more effectually trample on its power, and secure to himself absolute dominion, to obtain which he had spared no secret intrigue, no violation of confidence and humanity.

Æneas is such a cool, prudential, and philosophical character, his decency, his religion, his friendship to his relations, and his attention to the interests of his countrymen, are continually sounded in our ears, while his behaviour to the amiable Carthaginian Queen scarcely leaves him any well-founded claim to the more important qualities of honour, gratitude, and sentiment. He has not even the common apologies of youth, and violence of passion, to plead in his defence. He seduces the warm-hearted and generous Dido, at an age when the passion for criminal gratification is generally subjected to the principles of propriety and decency even in the most depraved men. He retains, however, even here, his usual pretensions of regard to

the authority of the gods; and when he is about to relinquish, with the most philosophical insensibility, a woman who had loaded him with every favour, and was about to die for the loss of her honour he had violated, he urges their authority in apology for his criminal conduct. The poet seems sensible of the indelicacy of the situation in which he had placed his hero, and attempts to justify him by the feeble argument, that he was not regularly married, and that the lady was of suspicious virtue. But this argument is a mere evasion, and is contradicted by the reserve, the modesty, and high sense of honour, with which the poet has delineated her. Virgil could not approve the conduct of Æneas in this incident, but, perhaps, he trusted to the national antipathy entertained by the Romans against the Carthaginians, to render it acceptable; or intended to insinuate, that resentment against the behaviour of his hero was a co-operating cause of the long and bloody wars which afterwards took place between these nations *.

Though the character of Æneas is liable to greater reprehension in the affair of Dido than in any other transaction of the poem, yet it is by no means exempted from censure in the negotiation with Latinus, concerning his daughter Lavinia. Lavinia, with the consent of all her friends, had promised

* Ruæus notis ad Arg. lib. iv. Æn.

her hand to the young Turnus, but Æneas interferes, kills the lover, and marries the miſtreſs. The poet, as uſual, indeed pretends to obviate the cenſure which naturally attends ſuch conduct, by repreſenting it as the will of fate, ſignified by numerous auguries; but, although ſuch interpoſition of ſuperior powers may ſilence, it cannot ſatisfy; and it ſhould ſeem, Virgil might have ſaved the honour both of the gods and of his hero, by introducing him to reſcue Lavinia from the arms of a ſuitor who was diſagreeable to her, inſtead of employing him to ſnatch her from the embraces of a man who had gained her heart, and who appears to have merited that favour.

The character of Dido is exquiſitely marked, and admirably ſupported. In the delineation of it, Virgil has diſcovered the moſt intimate knowledge of the human heart; and it is impoſſible to read her tragical ſtory without being deeply affected. We may cenſure, perhaps, the ſuddenneſs of her attachment to Æneas; but, if we conſider the eminent fame of her viſitor, the ſplendid and admirable relation he had exhibited of the deſtruction of Troy, in which himſelf had acted ſuch a conſpicuous part, and reflect at the ſame time how apt the human heart is to love what it reſpects, we may diſcover for her conduct much matter of apology. Virgil holds a high rank as an epic poet, but it can ſcarcely be doubted,

from this incident, that he might have courted the tragic muſe with equal ſucceſs.

The only remaining perſonage of the Æneid, of importance ſufficient to entitle his character to a particular review, is the Italian hero Turnus. The poet was diſpoſed to exhibit him as poſſeſſed of all the magnanimous qualities of heroiſm, that he might do greater honour to Æneas, who was intended to vanquiſh him. But he has, perhaps, proceeded too far; for, although he has given to Æneas the ſtronger arm, and made him lay Turnus in the duſt, yet I believe the latter will be more a favourite of the reader than the former.

Turnus poſſeſſes all the qualities which attract our eſteem; his ſituation ſtrongly excites our commiſeration. Eſteem and commiſeration are powerful recommendations to our approbation. He is repreſented as candid, generous, brave, and magnanimous. He was attached to Lavinia, who had countenanced his paſſion, and he was ready to hazard his life and fortune in defence of his miſtreſs and his country. He conſidered Æneas as a wandering adventurer, who had abuſed religion and the auguries of the gods, for the moſt unjuſtifiable purpoſe of depriving him of a woman whom he adored, and of the ſucceſſion to a kingdom to which he was entitled. He appears conſcious of the juſtice of his cauſe, and exerts himſelf in its defence with all that

activity and zeal which capacity and ambition naturally prompt. The reader allows he ſupports the cauſe of juſtice and honour, and regrets that the gods ſhould deny ſucceſs to a hero who appears to deſerve it ſo well. It were certainly to be wiſhed that Virgil had exhibited the character of Turnus as leſs amiable, or that of Æneas as leſs exceptionable.

The ſentiments of the Æneid merit high praiſe. They are void of affectation of every ſort; no falſe pomp, no forced conceit, no vulgarity, ever make their appearance. They diſplay on every occaſion the dictates of a good heart, a fine and cultivated imagination, a correct taſte, and a ſound judgement. This is the ground on which Virgil equals, if he does not ſurpaſs, all other poets. No author, perhaps, poſſeſſes ſo highly the art of commanding the attention of his reader. He rolls on with the moſt pleaſant tide of the moſt enchanting matter, and it is not in the reader's power not to be inſtructed and amuſed. Numberleſs examples might be produced. Open only the account of the deſtruction of Troy, the incident of Dido, or of the deſcent to the infernal regions, and it will be found that attention is inſtantly arreſted, and that it is ſcarcely practicable to diſengage it till the incident is finiſhed. All his ſentiments are natural, dignified, and pictureſque, but he is particularly fortunate in

those which are tender, and frequently also in those which are sublime. Beside the tragical narrative of Dido, the adventure of Nisus and Euryalus may be consulted as a specimen of his pathetic powers, and I shall present some examples of his talents for the sublime. The following picture of a storm, in the first book, is justly entitled to that character.

> " Eripiunt subito nubes cœlumque diemque
> Teucrorum ex oculis; ponto nox incubat atra.
> Intonuere poli, et crebris micat ignibus æther:
> Præsentemque viris intentant omnia mortem."

The comparison of Turnus, arming for the battle to Mars, in the twelfth book, is drawn in the boldest colours of imagination.

> " Qualis apud gelidi cum flumina concitus Hebri,
> Sanguineus Mavors clipeo increpat; atque furentes
> Bella movens, immittit equos; illi æquore aperto
> Ante Notos, Zephyrumque volant. Gemit ultima pulsu
> Thraca pedum, circumque atræ Formidinis ora,
> Iræque, insidiæque, Dei comitatus aguntur."

But, while we commend the propriety of the sentiments of Virgil, and give the highest praise to his taste and his judgement, we cannot fail to regret that he has not attempted to be more an original, and to borrow less from the great poets of Greece.

It is not to be doubted that he has kept Homer too frequently in view in every part of his poem. I have already ſpecified ſome examples of this attention, but the article of ſentiments will afford many more. There are few illuſtrious thoughts, or ſtriking ſimiles in Homer, of which he has not appropriated ſome part. If we conſult the Saturnalia of Macrobius, and the Notes of Dr Clarke, in his excellent edition of the Iliad, we will be tempted to conclude there is hardly an original thought in the Æneid. But although we ſhould admit a little ſtraining in a number of the inſtances quoted by theſe authors, yet it muſt be confeſſed, that many of the moſt brilliant compariſons of the Æneid are copied from Homer and Apollonius Rhodius, and that Virgil frequently has done little more than tranſlate theſe poets, without adding to their pictures any new circumſtances.

I am apt to think, that the modeſty of the Roman poet, and his high veneration for the great Grecian bard, did injuſtice to his genius, and induced him to be content with the reputation of an imitator, when he might reaſonably have aſpired to the merit of an original. His imagination was abundantly vigorous to have been ſucceſsful, had he truſted to its efforts, had he permitted it freely to ranſack nature, and to appropriate whatever he found ſuitable to his purpoſe. But he was afraid to

desert the beaten tract, and ingloriously chose to paint after Homer, rather than after nature. He reckoned himself, I doubt not, much obliged to that poet, but I should not hesitate to conclude, that the Æneid might have been a more original, and a more eminent work, had the author of it never copied the Iliad.

The Æneid is not less eminent in diction than in sentiment. The versification is melody itself; and it is scarcely possible to imagine any succession of articulate sounds more beautifully modulated. If I might venture to insinuate the least imperfection in it, I should be tempted to think that the author had sometimes softened it too much, and had stripped it of that bolder and rougher tone, which, perhaps, accords better with the magnanimous sentiments of epic poetry. Howsoever this may be, we must admit that no writer of Latin hexameters has any pretensions to rival Virgil. It is even doubtful whether the great Grecian bard, with the advantage of the most musical language in the world, can be allowed to have consulted more effectually the pleasure of the ear in the formation of his verses.

But the diction of Virgil is not only most musical, it possesses also all the dignity and ornament which adapt it peculiarly to express the noble sentiments of epic poetry. He never attempts pomp of expression, without a suitable elevation of thought; he never deviates into affectation. His style must at-

tract attention, but, meritorious as it is, it is supported more by the beauty of the thoughts, than the elegance of the phraseology.

I have examined the Æneid with all the freedom to which candid criticism is entitled, and without which it cannot be of much use. I am not conscious of any inclination to applaud the work of Virgil, because it is one of the most eminent productions of antiquity; nor am I sensible of any disposition to detract from its merit, because it has gained universal applause. I have offered my opinion as it resulted from an examination of the poem, independent of every extraneous consideration.

Let the ancient poets have all the praise they deserve, and they will always retain a very ample portion; but let us not be fascinated by that blind veneration which exhibits them as faultless and inimitable, and which is equally opprobrious to solid fame and sound criticism.

LECTURE LII.

EPIC POETRY—LUCAN—ARIOSTO—TASSO.

LUCAN is the only remaining author of Rome, whose poem is so entire, or whose merit is so considerable, as to entitle them to a particular discussion. The Pharsalia deserves the appellation of an heroic poem, but it cannot be denominated epic. It is totally destitute of unity of action; it preserves no one great object in view, nor pretends to teach any important lesson, either in politics or morality. It is no more than a history in verse of the civil war between Cæsar and Pompey. It begins at the famous passage of the Rubicon by Cæsar, and terminates at the death of Pompey in Egypt.

We cannot doubt that Lucan did not expect the Pharsalia to pass for epic. In the nature of the subject, and in the manner of managing it, we discern no attempts to accommodate it to the rules of epic

composition, of which we cannot suppose that the author was ignorant. The subject was too recent, and too well known, to admit those fictitious circumstances which were necessary to constitute a great epic action; and accordingly we find, that though the author has sometimes changed the position of an incident, or heightened a description, yet that he has never presumed to falsify history, nor to adopt any incident of which it did not suggest the materials. In the arrangement of events, he has not made the least effort to reverse the order of time, to preserve the unity of action, or to introduce collateral circumstances at intervals, in the form of episodes. The Pharsalia is an historical heroic poem, like Addison's Campaign, and the author has interwoven every species of merit of which this line of composition was susceptible. He has exhibited sublime sentiments, splendid descriptions, poetical figures of all kinds, ghosts and apparitions, and not a little political and moral reflection.

The principal characters of this poem are Pompey, Cæsar, and Cato. The first is delineated with all the colours in which he appears in history. He is proud and ambitious, vain of the warlike enterprises he had conducted, and of the triumphs he had gained; impatient of the inferiority and equality which the peace of republican government demanded, and particularly jealous of the popularity and military reputation of Cæsar. Cæsar is repre-

fented as active, bold, and afpiring; as forward to embroil the affairs of his country, and regardlefs of her calamities, provided he might rife, even on her ruins, to the high point of elevation which committed to him the difpofal of the lives and fortunes of his fellow-fubjects. The poet delineates and contrafts the characters of thefe illuftrious leaders in the following lines. He thus defcribes Pompey:

"Nec coiere pares, alter vergentibus annis
In fenium, longoque togæ tranquillior ufu
Dedidicit jam pace ducem, famæque petitor
Multa dare in vulgus; totus popularibus auris
Impelli, plaufuque fui gaudere theatri;
Nec reparare novas vires, multumque priori
Credere fortunæ, ftat magni nominis umbra."

He illuftrates the decline of Pompey's influence as the commencement of the civil war, and the venerable appearance he preferved under that diminution of his power, by the fubfequent fimilitude of an aged oak loaded with the fpoils of war, not a little picturefque, and by no means deftitute of poetical grandeur.

"Qualis frugifero quercus fublimis in agro,
Exuvias veteres populi, facrataque geftans
Dona ducum, nec jam validis radicibus hærens
Pondere fixa fuo eft, nudofque per aëra ramos
Effundens, trunco, non frondibus, efficit umbram,

At quamvis primo nutet casura sub Euro
Tot circum silvæ, firmo se robore, tollant,
Sola tamen colitur."

The character of Cæsar is drawn with a bold and glowing pencil. He scarcely, however, does him justice; he allows him not the virtues of humanity and generosity, which he certainly possessed in an eminent degree. Lucan's disposition and temper led him to favour Pompey, and he wished, perhaps, to throw a shade into the character of Cæsar, with the view of aggrandizing his principal personage.

"Sed non in Cæsare tantum
Nomen erat, nec fama ducis; sed nescia virtus
Stare loco; solusque pudor non vincere bello.
Acer et indomitus; quo spes quoque ira vocasset,
Ferre manum, et numquam temerando parcere ferro:
Successus urgere suos, instare favori
Numinis, impellens, quicquid sibi summa petenti
Obstaret, gaudensque viam fecisse ruina."

As the poet had subjoined a similitude to the character of Pompey, he adorns that of Cæsar in a similar manner, and compares the activity and violence of this hero to the rapidity and dreadful flashes of lightning. The poetical merit, however, of this comparison, is not equal to that of the former. It abounds with general and ambiguous phraseology, which leaves little impression on the mind.

"Qualiter expressum ventis, per nubila fulmen
Ætheris impulsi sonitu, mundique fragore
Emicuit rupitque diem, populosque paventes
Terruit, obliqua præstringens lumina flamma;
In sua templa furit; nullaque exire vetante
Materia, magnamque cadens, magnamque revertens,
Dat stragem late, sparsosque recolligit ignes."

The first four lines deserve much praise, but when in the three last lines he describes the thunder as going and returning through the air to collect its scattered flashes, we discover that his description is either founded on a false theory, or that he substitutes quaintness and conceit in the place of the painting of nature and truth.

Lucan was not content to be a poet, he was also a moralist and a politician. Cato, for this reason, seems to be his favourite, though not most splendid character. He never neglects an opportunity of testifying his respect for this eminent and singular patriot, and he has made him utter all his own opinions about government and virtue. The noble and animated colouring with which he paints his sentiments and manners in the following lines, evinces the admiration he entertained for him, and accounts for the bold compliment he pays him, when he presumes to set his authority in opposition to that of the gods. He exhibits, also, some of

the moſt remarkable opinions of the ſect of the Stoics, of which Cato was a member.

> "Hi mores, hæc duri immota Catonis
> Secta fuit, ſervare modum; finemque tenere,
> Naturamque ſequi; patriæque impendere vitam;
> Nec ſibi, ſed toti genitum ſe credere mundo.
> Huic epulæ, viciſſe famem, magnique Penates
> Submoviſſe hiemem tecto; pretioſaque veſtis.
> Hirtam membra ſuper Romani more Quiritis
> Induxiſſe togam Veneris, huic maximus uſus
> Progenies, urbi pater eſt, urbique maritus;
> Juſtitiæ cultor, rigidi ſervator honeſti.
> In commune, bonus, nulloſque Catonis in actus
> Subrepſit, partemque tulit, ſibi nata voluptas."

From theſe ſpecimens, it is eaſy to diſcern the genius of Lucan. Vigour of imagination, it will be admitted, he poſſeſſes in an eminent degree; he appears to be a warm friend to virtue, to civil liberty, and to the happineſs of mankind. His poetry, alſo, is not deſtitute of merit. It is expreſſive, ſonorous, and even ſometimes ſublime; but when we have allowed him all this praiſe, we muſt ſet bounds to panegyric, what we have to add muſt aſſume the diſagreeable tone of reprehenſion.

His imagination, though vigorous and lively, is exceedingly irregular, and compels us frequently to queſtion the accuracy of his taſte, and the ſolidity of his judgement. Though many of his paintings

are picturesque and vivid, yet he never seems to know when he has said enough ; he spreads them out to a length that is frequently intolerable ; he accumulates till he fatigues and disgusts the reader, and effaces the impression he had been at pains to imprint. All his political and moral reflections, also, are diffuse. When he would be pathetic, he degenerates into description ; when he would reason, he declaims ; and when he would be sublime, he often deviates into bombast.

The battle of Pharsalia, the most illustrious incident of the poem, and one of the greatest events which history can present, loses much of its dignity by the manner in which it is exhibited. He puts a long speech into the mouth of each of his heroes, Pompey and Cæsar, which it is impossible to suppose either of them could have composure or time to deliver. He makes each of them undertake a minute and careful detail of the causes of the war, as if their followers needed then to be satisfied concerning the propriety or rectitude of the part they had chosen to act ; and he causes each of them vilify the views, and hopes, and resources of his antagonist. He suspends his account of the battle, after he has made both armies march into the field, till he has completed a long moral harangue on the calamities and desolations that fatal day was about to produce.

The detail of the engagement is perfectly cha-

racteriſtic of the poet. It preſents a conſtant repetition of the words, *wounds*, *death*, *blood*, *spears*, *swords*. No diſtinct idea is exhibited of any part of it, or of the achievements of any body of men or perſon in it. We diſcover no exertion in the generals, either of valour or conduct. We learn only that the battle of Pharſalia was a maſs of confuſion, and extremely bloody; that it was quickly decided, and that Pompey was defeated.

In ſupport of theſe ſtrictures, I ſhall produce two other quotations, and with them ſhall be concluded the remarks which I have to offer on the poem.— The firſt will exhibit a ſpecimen of the author's powers for oratorial declamation, and the other of his capacity for political or moral recommendation.

Appian relates, in his Hiſtory of the Civil Wars of Rome, that while Cæſar waited with a part of his army at Dyrrachium, he became ſo impatient for the arrival of Antony with a reinforcement from Italy, that he went on board a ſmall veſſel, unknown to the maſter and the crew, and ſet ſail toward Brunduſium, to haſten the departure of the troops. The veſſel was overtaken by a ſtorm, and the ſeamen were greatly alarmed for their ſafety. To encourage them to proceed, Cæſar diſcovered himſelf, and addreſſed the pilot in the following ſhort but magnanimous ſpeech: "Θάῤῥει ἴθι Καίσαρα φέρεις καὶ τὴν Καίσαρος τύχην." "Quid times? Cæſarem vehis."—

"Proceed with confidence, you carry Cæſar and all his good fortune!" Obſerve how Lucan has ſpun out and debilitated this heroic and laconic addreſs.

> "Fiſus cuncta ſibi ceſſura pencula Cæſar;
> Sperne minas, inquit, pelagi ventoque furenti
> Trade ſinum. Italiam, ſi cælo auctore, recuſas
> Me pete. Sola tibi cauſa eſt hæc juſta timoris,
> Vectorem non noſſe tuum; quem numina nunquam
> Deſtituunt; de quo male tunc fortuna meretur,
> Cum poſt vota venit; medias perrumpe procellas,
> Tutela ſecura mea. Cæli, iſte, fretique,
> Non puppis noſtræ labor eſt hanc Cæſare preſſam
> A fluctu defendet onus. Nec longa furori
> Ventorum ſævo dabitur mora; proderit undis
> Iſta ratis. Ne flecte manum; fuge proxima velis
> Littora; tunc Calabro portum te crede potitum,
> Cum jam non poterit puppi, noſtræque ſaluti
> Altera terra dari. Quid tanta ſtrage paretur
> Ignoras? Quærit, pelagi, cœlique tumultu
> Quid præſtet fortuna mihi."

Never, ſurely, was there a ſpeech more unſuitable to the character that is ſuppoſed to utter it, or more unlike his real ſpeech. It is a ſeries of quaintneſs and affectation, the reverſe of the noble ſimplicity which diſtinguiſhes the thoughts and the writings of Cæſar. What can be more ſtrained than to pretend that the ſtorm was only an agitation of the air, and of the water, with which his veſſel had no

concern? that the waters would derive the advantage of being quickly at peace, because the storm could not long continue when his vessel was at sea? and, finally, that the meaning of the hurricane was to demonstrate how much he was a favourite of fortune, who would interfere to preserve him in the most imminent dangers?

When Pompey fled into Egypt, after the battle of Pharsalia, Ptolemy, King of that country, called together the counsellors, to advise in what manner he should treat the Roman fugitive. Pothinus, a favourite eunuch, exhorts him to take away his life, in the following speech, of which the argument is as sophistical and insidious, as the purpose it was intended to accomplish was base and inhuman. It affords, however, a good specimen of the author's powers for moral and political declamation.

"Jus, et fas multos faciunt, Ptolemeæ, nocentes.
Dat pænas laudata fides, cum sustinet inquit,
Quos fortuna premit. Fatis accede Deisque,
Et cole felices, miseros fuge. Sidera terræ,
Ut distant, ut flamma mari, sic utile recto.
Sceptrorum vis tota perit, si pendere justa
Incipit; evertetque arces respectus honesti.
Libertas scelerum est, quæ regna invisa tuetur;
Sublatusque modus gladiis facere omnia sæve,
Non impune licet, nisi cum facis. Exeat aula
Qui vult esse pius. Virtus et summa potestas

Non coeunt. Semper metuet quem sæva pudebunt.
Nulla fides umquam miseros elegit amicos."

We cannot easily imagine a more violent insult to every principle of honour, humanity, and justice, than this speech of Pothinus, of which I have extracted only the capital parts. We discern, however, in perfection, the diffuse and declamatory manner of the author. In a word, Lucan is a poet we may read once with emolument, and even with amusement, but he will scarcely become a favourite with any reader of refined taste. I have produced so many specimens to gratify curiosity concerning a poet who, I believe, is seldom perused.

In descending through the dark ages of ignorance and superstition, which overspread the western world posterior to the extinction of letters by the fall of the Roman empire in Europe, we discern the most early symbols of the revival of learning and civilization in Italy. The causes of this phœnomenon it belongs not to this place to investigate, but no dispute remains about the fact. Poetry of different kinds speedily made its appearance, and Italy could boast of her epic compositions, when the rest of Europe could scarcely read and write.

The first author of this class we meet with, is the celebrated Ariosto, author of Orlando Furioso, a poem which has for its subject the wars carried on by the Moors of Barbary and Spain, against Charle-

magne, King of France and Emperor of Germany, in the eighth century. It conſiſts of no fewer than forty-ſix cantos, or books, of which the ſtyle is poetical and beautiful. The author appears to have poſſeſſed a bold, but an irregular imagination, and we are often compelled to ſuſpect both the accuracy of his taſte and the ſoundneſs of his judgement. Had it not been for the partiality of his countrymen, who hold him forth as one of the moſt eminent heroic writers they poſſeſs, I am unable to conceive how he ſhould ever have been ranked as an epic poet. His work ſcarcely poſſeſſes a ſingle requiſite of that ſpecies of compoſition. It is void of unity of deſign, of majeſty of ſentiment, of elevation of diction, and of heroic action. Arioſto is a mere romancer, admirably qualified to attract the attention of an age which adored the achievements, and ſpells, and extravagant fictions of knight-errantry; but he cannot much gratify any taſte ſo poliſhed as to reliſh the beauties of Homer and Virgil.

The reader travels on enchanted ground from the beginning to the end of this wonderful performance. Necromancers and apparitions encounter him at every turn. One wonderful relation ſucceeds, or rather is interwoven with another; and the author, either to divert himſelf with the feelings of the reader, or to excite his ſurpriſe by ſuſpend-

ing his gratification, ſcruples not to carry on two or three of theſe relations at the ſame time. He frequently approaches the moſt intereſting criſis of an enterpriſe, then ſtops, introduces a new ſtory, or a part of a former one left unfiniſhed, and returns not, till after a ſimilar interval, to the point he had relinquiſhed. From what I have ſaid, I ſuppoſe it will be thought unneceſſary that I ſhould extend to greater length my account of Arioſto; I ſhall therefore proceed to diſcuſs the merit of the Gieruſalemme Liberata of Torquato Taſſo, who ſupports, much more effectually, the fame of Italy in epic compoſition.

Could we, for a moment, make allowance for the enthuſiaſm and folly of an ignorant age, the moſt extenſive and heroic achievements which, perhaps, hiſtory has to exhibit, are the prodigious armaments which were equipped in Europe to recover Jeruſalem from the hands of the Saracens. Never did the acquiſition of one object unite the inclinations and exertions of ſo many of mankind. Never were ſuch multitudes of troops aſſembled to ſhare in any enterpriſe. Never were ſuch diſtant and dangerous expeditions undertaken for purpoſes ſo formidable and ſo diſintereſted. In the days of Taſſo, the piety, the magnanimity, and the valour which were ſuppoſed to animate the cruſaders, were ſurveyed with reſpect, if not with admiration. But, although their exertions had then been ſtamped

with the ſame appellations of madneſs and extravagance with which we now reproach them, it was, perhaps, ſufficient apology for the author, that the actors were ſincere. Though we now ſmile at the inſignificance of the views and armaments of the Greeks in the Trojan war, and can ſcarcely review with ſerioufneſs the navigations and rencounters of Æneas, yet we allow not theſe circumſtances to infer a cenſure againſt the authors. The poet muſt be permitted to conſider his ſubject in the ſame important light in which it appeared to the perſonages he introduces. He is required to aggrandize their ſentiments and deeds, not to meaſure theſe by the opinions of judges wiſer, or more poliſhed than the actors.

I have thought it proper to offer theſe remarks as an apology for the fable of Taſſo, and to illuſtrate the magnitude of it, notwithſtanding the unfavourable opinion we now entertain of the tranſactions from which it originated. The recovery of the Holy Land from the poſſeſſion of infidels, was ſuppoſed to be the moſt meritorious undertaking Chriſtians could perform on earth, and was held to be entitled to the happineſs of heaven as its reward. It was glory to be engaged in ſuch an enterpriſe; it was the higheſt honour to ſacrifice in ſuch a cauſe all the ſtrongeſt attachments to life, fortune, friends, and country.

Taſſo has ſelected for the ſubject of his poem the moſt memorable of theſe expeditions, which was conducted by Godfrey of Boulogne; but he has not, like Lucan, undertaken a hiſtory of the expedition, he has fixed upon the principal incident of it, namely, the taking of the city of Jeruſalem; and he accordingly opens his poem in the beginning of the ſixth year of the war, with a full diſplay of the forces of Godfrey on the plains of Tortoſa, ſituate near the eaſtern ſhore of the Mediterranean ſea, and within a few days march of the holy city. The taking of the city conſtitutes the unity of the action, and the operations of the ſiege diſplay the heroic ſentiments and achievements of the characters. The action is ſimilar to that of the Æneid, it preſents one great end to be accompliſhed; but it does not, like the Iliad, inculcate, beſide, ſome important moral or political truth. It is no ſmall praiſe to Taſſo, that he reaches the eminence of Virgil, though he aſpire not to the extraordinary merit of Homer.

The machinery of Taſſo is taken from the ſuperſtition of the times in which his actors lived. The extenſive influence of infernal powers in the affairs of men, the exiſtence of necromancers and enchanters, the appearance of hobgoblins and ghoſts, and even the viſible interference of good angels, commiſſioned by Heaven on particular errands, were then univerſally believed. This faith is not more

incredible than the faith of Homer and Virgil, and Taſſo had an equal claim with theſe poets to the uſe of the public ſuperſtition. If we admit the propriety of it in one caſe, it is the ſqueamiſhneſs of criticiſm to refuſe it in the other. But although we admit the propriety of the choice of Taſſo, his application may be liable to ſome objection; and, after granting every apology, we muſt allow, that his ſupernatural powers, particularly his wizards and enchantreſſes, appear too often, and that the human paſſions are not allowed ſufficient ſcope to diſplay themſelves, and to operate the natural effects. The principal incidents of the poem are the reſult of the interference of ſupernatural agents. The famous enchantreſs Armida firſt induces many heroes of the cruſade to deſert their main buſineſs, and to engage in the enterpriſe of reſtoring her to the kingdom of Damaſcus, of which ſhe had been deprived. She next carries away Rinaldo, the principal hero of the poem, to her enchanted iſland in the Atlantic ocean, and there detains him in ſcenes of love and revelry during the greater part of the ſiege. The preſence, however, of Rinaldo, like that of Achilles in the Iliad, was neceſſary to complete the action, by diſplaying the moſt conſummate achievements of valour; and the poet, it ſeems, could contrive no expedient for accompliſhing this end, but by playing off incantation againſt incantation, and by procuring

the fuperior aid of a Chriftian magician to undo the fpells of the heathen enchantrefs.

In this inartificial manner does Taffo lavifh the exertions of his fupernatural powers, and fufpends, in a great meafure, the concatenations of motives and actions on which the ordinary train of human operations depends, and by means of which only we can denominate them either good or bad.

No ufeful example or important inftruction can be deduced from human conduct, unlefs men are permitted to act from the dictates of their own minds, without controul from fuperior power. To introduce, therefore, invifible beings on every emergence, has a tendency to deftroy or counteract all the emolument either of fentiment or wifdom which the illuftrious deeds of an epic poem are intended, and fhould be adapted, to convey.

LECTURE LIII.

EPIC POETRY—TASSO—MILTON.

THE variety of characters in the Gierusalemme Liberata, is not so great as in the Iliad, but it is greater than in the Æneid. Tasso's merit is very eminent, both in the number and in the delineations of the actors he introduces. The principal on the side of the crusaders are Godfrey, Rinaldo, Tancred, and Gildippe, a female warrior; on the side of the Saracens, Aladine, King of Jerusalem, Argantes, Solyman, and Clorinda, another female warrior. All these characters are possessed of high heroic virtue; they are distinctly delineated, and maintained with much consistency and spirit.

The character of Godfrey is well adapted to his station of leader of the confederated Christian powers. He is valiant, though his valour is not of

the moſt conſummate kind. It is intermixed with all the prudence and diſcretion which are neceſſary to conduct with propriety ſo great an enterpriſe, and which interfere, of courſe, with thoſe eminent diſplays of courage that render a warrior regardleſs of perſonal ſafety. Rinaldo is intended for the capital figure of the poem, and he is repreſented as poſſeſſed of all thoſe qualities which conſtitute the conſummate hero. High ambition for military fame, perfect contempt of danger and death, extraordinary eminence in all feats of activity and addreſs, a mind familiar with great ſentiments and ſtrong paſſions, are the characteriſtics by which we diſtinguiſh him from all his compeers. The valour of Tancred is ſuppoſed inferior to that of Rinaldo; his ſoul is divided between ardent deſire for military glory, and the tender attachments of love. He forms a warrior different from any delineated by the ancient epic poets. His courage is ſoftened with that humanity and delicacy which modern manners have introduced into war, and by which it has been ſhown, that barbarity and ferocity are no neceſſary appendages of a hero.

All the Saracen chiefs are brave, but as the poet intended them to be vanquiſhed by his Chriſtian champions, he has deſcribed each of them with a portion of ſome reprehenſible quality, which, in poetical juſtice, might make them appear to deſerve their ſevere fate. There was a neceſſity, at the

ſame time, that they ſhould be exhibited as brave, to enhance the merit of their defeat, and to diſplay more effectually the triumphant courage of the Chriſtian heroes, who are deſigned to be the favourites of the reader.

The character and circumſtances of Aladine, King of Jeruſalem, are in ſome articles ſimilar to thoſe of Priam, King of Troy, in the Iliad. He is old and loquacious, and poſſeſſes little more influence in the buſineſs of his confederates than is complaiſantly granted to his ſtation and to his age. He is exceedingly inquiſitive about the characters and connections of all the Chriſtian champions whom he obſerves from the walls, and he has an attendant, a Chriſtian captive, who anſwers his queſtions, and ſatisfies his curioſity. Theſe, however, are all the amiable qualities of Priam he poſſeſſes. He is repreſented as having grown old in cruelty and injuſtice, without having diſcovered the iniquity of his conduct, or having attempted to reform it. His government is ſupported by fear, not by attachment; and, in the caſe of a defeat, he expects as little mercy from his ſubjects as his enemies.

Argantes is the principal hero on the ſide of the Saracens. To him are committed the management of the operations for the defence of the city, and the conduct of the various ſallies which were judged expedient to deſtroy the works, or to defeat the

deſigns of the beſiegers. He exhibits every illu-ſtrious achievement conſiſtent with an inferiority to the principal champion on the ſide of the Chriſtians. He is active, enterpriſing, impetuous, and often commits dreadful devaſtation among the Chriſtian forces. He ſupports his character and his cauſe with much ſucceſs and efficacy, till he is killed by Tancred, toward the termination of the poem, when the author is preparing for the concluſion of his action, and the triumph of the beſiegers. His courage, however, though eminent, is of the moſt unamiable ſpecies. He is a mere hero; wounds, and death, and deſtruction, are the pleaſure of his ſoul. He poſſeſſes not a ſingle generous or humane quality; valour ferocious, and unrelenting, is the idol he adores.

Solyman is the warrior next in rank and reputation to Argantes. He had once poſſeſſed the throne of Turkey, but had been expelled from his dominions for his cruelty, and now commanded a band of deſperate Arabians, determined to take vengeance on the Chriſtians, who, he deemed, had been inſtrumental in baniſhing him from his kingdom. He is delineated with all the impetuoſity, violence, and ferocity of Argantes, but his characteriſtic tinge is daring impiety. He ſets God and men at equal defiance, and gratifies his ambition and revenge by the deliberate infringement of every law, human and divine.

The two female warriors, Gildippe on the ſide of the Chriſtians, and Clorinda on that of the Saracens, are the only capital perſonages of whom I have not hitherto taken notice. They are imitations of the Camilla of Virgil, and poſſeſs every heroic quality of which the female character can eaſily be ſuppoſed ſuſceptible. There is ſomething romantic in the contemplation of a female warrior, and the ſingular ſituations into which ſhe may be thrown, may gratify the reader with ſurpriſe and amuſement. She affords opportunity, alſo, of intermixing tender ſcenes of love in the intervals of action, which admirably contraſt and diverſify the horrors of bloodſhed and war. But nothing more can be ſaid in defence of the character. It is undoubtedly unnatural, perhaps unamiable, unleſs in caſes of neceſſity. The aſcendancy of the fair ſex is much more powerful and deciſive when they fly to the hero for protection, than when they equip themſelves with the helmet and the lance, and pretend to rival him in the achievements of the martial field.

Beſides theſe principal perſonages, the Gieruſalemme Liberata exhibits many inferior heroes, who occaſionally appear, as in all other epic poems, for the purpoſes of lending names to occupy vacant ſpaces, and of aggrandizing the principal champions, by ſurrendering life to their ſwords.

Theſe characters are not more vigorouſly con-

ceived, nor more diſtinctly delineated, than the ſentiments they expreſs are magnificent and characteriſtic. Taſſo, perhaps, never reaches the ſublimity of Homer, but neither does he condeſcend to adopt the extravagant fictions, and the romantic achievements of Arioſto. The grandeur of Taſſo is uniform and reſpectable; his imagination is always elevated, often ſublime; his conceptions are always dignified, often noble and heroic. The following deſcription of the Chriſtian and Saracen armies, when about to engage, will juſtify the opinion I have advanced.

* " Now, front to front, in dreadful pauſe they ſtand,
Burn for the fight, and only wait command.

* " Grande, e mirabil coſa era il vedere
Quando quel campo, e queſto a fronte venne;
Come ſpeigate in ordine le ſchiere,
Di mover gia, gia d'aſſilire accenne;
Sparſe al vento ondeggiando ir le bandiere,
E ventolar ſu i gran cimier le penne;
Habiti, fregi, impreſe, arme, e colori,
D'oro, e di ferro al Sol, lampi, e fulgori.
Sembra d'alveri denſi alta foreſta
L'un campo, e l'altro, di tant haſte abonda.
Son teſti gli archi, e ſon le lancie in reſta;
Vibranſi i dardi, e rotaſi ogni fionda.
Ogni cavallo in guerra anco s'apreſta;
Gli odii, e'l furor del ſuo ſignor ſeconda;
Raſpa, batte, nitriſce, e ſi raggira,
Gonfia le nari, e fumo, e foco ſpira."

CANT. XX. XXVIII.

The ſtreaming banners to the wind are ſpread,
The plumage nods on every creſted head;
Arms, veſts, devices, catch the ſunny rays,
And ſteel and gold with mingled ſplendour blaze;
Each ſpacious hoſt on either ſide appears
A ſteely wood, a grove of waving ſpears.
They bend their bows, in haſte their lances take,
They whirl their ſlings, their ready jav'lins ſhake;
Each generous ſteed to meet the fight aſpires,
And ſeconds with his own his maſter's fires,
He neighs, he foams, he paws the ground beneath,
And ſmoke and flame his ſwelling noſtrils breathe."

The compariſon of Rinaldo to Mars in point of valour, and to Cupid in point of youth and beauty, is no leſs happily imagined.

* "But, lo! o'er theſe, o'er all the hoſt confeſt,
The young Rinaldo tower'd above the reſt.
With martial grace his looks around he caſt,
And gazing crowds admir'd him as he paſt,
Mature beyond his years, his virtues ſhoot,
As, mix'd with bloſſoms, grows the budding fruit,

* "Ma il fanciullo Rinaldo e ſovra queſti,
E ſovra quanti in mortra eran condutti;
Dolcemente feroce alzar vedreſti
La regal fronte, e in lui mirar ſol tutti.
L'eta precourſe, e la ſperauza, e preſte
Pareano i fior, quando n'uſciro i frutti.
S'el miri fulminar ne l'arme avvolto,
Marte lo ſtimi; amor ſe ſcopre il volto."

Cant. i. lviii.

When clad in ſteel, he ſeems like Mars to move,
His face diſclos'd, he ſeems the god of love."

It muſt, however, be acknowledged, that the compariſons of this poet neither preſent the novelty, the variety, nor the beautiful landſcapes with which we are delighted in thoſe of Homer and Virgil. Taſſo almoſt always confines his compariſons to the circumſtances of reſemblance, while theſe bards captivate the imagination by exhibiting beautiful paintings of adjacent objects. His ſimiles, of courſe, are leſs captivating and pleaſant; the imagination quickly relinquiſhes them, and reſumes the diſmal ſcene of war and devaſtation, to ſhift which a little they were introduced.

The Italian, the moſt mellifluous language of modern times, may appear little adapted to ſupport the dignity and ſolemnity of heroic diction; but, to our ſurpriſe, we find it in the hands of Taſſo ſuſceptible both of ſtrength and variety, and frequently not a little magnificent and ſonorous. It is to the licences aſſumed by their poets that the Italians owe this merit of their language Had they been obliged to write in poetry as the language appears in proſe, no author could have added to their verſification that boldneſs and vigour which heroic diction requires. But by compoſitions of words, and eliſions of final vowels, they have elevated their poetical ſtyle to a tone of force and ſpirit that few

modern tongues equal, none but our own ſurpaſs. We regret that their poets had not proceeded a ſtep farther, and exterminated the monkiſh and barbarous practice of rhyming; but though they retain the uſe of that childiſh ornament, yet it muſt be confeſſed that no modern tongue manages it with ſo much grace. They derive this advantage from the nature of their heroic ſtanza, which is a ſplendid meaſure of eight lines, in which no two adjacent lines rhyme to one another, except the two laſt. The other ſix lines all rhyme, but without ſucceeding one another. The firſt line rhymes with the third, the ſecond with the fifth, and the fourth with the ſixth. The gingle of the rhymes is thus imperfectly felt, and the reader almoſt believes he is peruſing blank verſe. In a word, in whatever light we contemplate the Gieruſalemme Liberata, we muſt allow it to be entitled to high fame, to be an honour to the country and to the author that produced it, and to deſerve an illuſtrious rank among the few epic poems the world has hitherto beheld.

Among the moſt eminent authors of the moſt eminent ſpecies of compoſition, it is not a little flattering to be able to place a native of our own iſland; I mean, the author of Paradiſe Loſt. The object of this performance is to celebrate the moſt remarkable revolution ever happened to human na-

ture; to delineate man in his pure and perfect ſtate, and to deſcribe the dreadful conſequences which corruption introduces into his conſtitution. The ſubject is univerſally intereſting, and afforded ample field for a ſplendid diſplay of the moſt illuſtrious exertions of imagination and paſſion. Both ſides of the picture admitted the boldeſt figures, and the moſt lively colouring, and they were admirably calculated to heighten the effect of one another by contraſt.

But Milton muſt ſoon have obſerved that the ſubject was more accommodated to the operations of the tragic, than of the epic muſe; that it was deſtitute of incidents to form any long or varied action; and, that it could not pretend much to excite admiration, the great object of the epic muſe. The human actors, Adam and Eve, could be exhibited in two lights only, as poſſeſſed of health, innocence, and happineſs, before their fall, or as expoſed to pain, labour, diſeaſe, turbulent paſſion, and miſery after it; in neither of which ſituations could they conſtitute eminent figures in epic poetry. The ſubject, then, muſt have been abandoned for ever, as improper for the operations of the epic muſe, had not the author ventured to employ ſupernatural agents, and to aſſign to them the moſt important and ſplendid tranſactions of his work. He has, accordingly, introduced all the infernal perſonages whom revelation mentions as enemies to

the human race; and from their unremitting exertions to counteract the designs of the Almighty, but particularly those relative to mankind, he has formed the greater part of the epic portion of his action. He has not even scrupled to render the most sublime doctrines of the Christian religion subservient to his designs, and has exhibited God Almighty, Jesus Christ, and the holy angels, as acting important parts in his illustrious work.

These most exalted agents in nature do not constitute the machinery of Paradise Lost. They are the active characters, who carry on the business, whose sentiments and conduct we admire in the same manner as we do the wisdom and courage of Æneas, or the strength and intrepidity of Achilles. The concerts and operations of the devils, are the chief instruments of the catastrophe of the poem, the fall of man. The interposition of God, of Jesus Christ, and of the angels, forms the means of preserving him from entire destruction, and of inspiring him with hope amid all his distress. The divine and supernatural beings, then, are the principal actors through the whole of the poem of Milton; but they are the sole actors in the epic part. There is not a single scene where Adam and Eve are introduced that in any sense can be denominated epic. They neither fight battles, kill their enemies, conquer provinces, nor defend towns. They

are engaged entirely in the peaceful and pleasant scenes of rural employment, or domestic happiness. They contemplate the beauties of nature, tend the spontaneous productions of the earth, listen to accounts of the wonders of creation, or sing the praises of God.

This conduct of Milton is altogether singular; the world cannot furnish another instance of an epic poem, the personages of which are real and supernatural. He appears to violate the first principle of epic composition, which has been maintained to be, to exalt our conceptions of human powers and exertions, and to inspire us with the most favourable opinion of the rank we hold in creation. Shall we then submit to the conclusion these premises would infer, oppose the judgement of the most refined and enlightened of our own critics, and subscribe to the opinion of Voltaire, that Milton has no just title to be ranked in the class of epic poets, though he possesses more sublimity, the capital ingredient of epic composition, than any other writer, ancient or modern? We cannot easily admit an inference so violent, though it may be difficult to refute the premises from which it results.

To elucidate this curious topic, and to assert to the genius of Milton all the poetic reputation to which it may aspire, it may be observed, that though he excites admiration only by supernatural means, and though the only heroes in his poem are

ſpiritual beings, yet that he attains every eſſential requiſite of epic poetry, and that the objection is not, perhaps, very material, at leaſt not inſurmountable.

The great end of epic compoſition is to enlarge and exalt the mind, by the contemplation of magnificent objects. The grandeur of the objects is the eſſential conſideration, the ſpecies of them are of inferior importance. Of all objects, then, and of all characters, thoſe ſeem beſt calculated to accompliſh the deſigns of the epic muſe that moſt effectually rouſe and elevate the mind; but to a perſon who believes the Chriſtian creed, the circle of nature contains nothing more magnificent, or more apt to engage attention, than the illuſtrious operations and ſublime ſentiments which Paradiſe Loſt has to exhibit. The conceptions of the higheſt order of ſpiritual beings, the moſt momentous and potent exertions of ſupernatural powers, are the objects of the contemplation of the reader. Had Milton reſtricted his genius to the introduction of human actors, as other epic poets have done, he might indeed have flattered human nature, he might have elevated our conceptions of the magnanimity and achievements of which it is ſuſceptible, but he could not ſo effectually have ſwelled the imagination, nor ſo completely have excited admiration.

The ſentiments and operations of men, in their

moſt exalted and heroic form, are inſignificant and diminutive, compared with thoſe of angelic natures. The tranſactions of the Greeks and Trojans, of the Trojans and Italians, however ſplendid when compared with the deeds of ordinary men, appear to claim little attention, far leſs admiration, when placed in oppoſition to the battles of the angels, or to the magnificent council of the infernal ſpirits in Pandemonium. The mind of man can ſcarcely graſp the majeſty of theſe immenſe ſubjects. It does more than admire; it is overwhelmed with their dignity and ſublimity.

Allowing, then, the ſolidity of the apology I have offered in behalf of Milton, nothing can be imagined more illuſtrious than the action of his poem, or more ſublime than the ſentiments and deeds of his characters. The action involves, not the taking of an inſignificant town, like the Iliad, nor the eſtabliſhment of a wandering colony of adventurers in comfortable habitations, like the Æneid, but the happineſs of the whole human race, and the momentous interpoſitions of Heaven and hell to promote or obſtruct that great event.

The epic part, then, of Paradiſe Loſt, is the conſultations and achievements of the angels, and the author has ſhown much addreſs in delineating this great ſubject at full length, when it was not profeſſedly the object of his work. He could not exhibit it in ſucceſſion, becauſe it would have deſtroyed the

unity of his action. He accordingly opens the poem with a view of the effects of the revolt of the infernal powers, and employs his two first books in describing their sentiments and situations, after their expulsion from the heavenly mansions. He artfully connects these consultations with the subject of his poem, by making part of them refer to their hostile designs and operations against the human race. He contrasts the consultations of the Satanic powers, by a display of the councils of heaven with respect to mankind, in the third book; in which he has not scrupled to introduce God Almighty and Jesus Christ, as employed in adjusting the plan of Providence with regard to man, as permitting the artifice of Satan to succeed against him, and as projecting the scheme of his redemption through Jesus Christ.

The scene now changes to the most splendid and delightful exhibition the imagination of man can conceive, or the purest virtue would chuse to contemplate. It delineates the charming garden of Eden, replenished with all the bounty and beauty of nature, and inhabited by two human creatures, perfect in their faculties, complete in innocence and virtue, and partaking of all the happiness their exalted capacities can enjoy. The author artfully shifts the scene again, and contrasts this gay and captivating picture with an account of all the tremendous encounters of the angelic host, that took place in heaven, on the re-

volt of the fallen angels, which he introduces by way of epiſode. This great ſubject was calculated to ſummon all the energy of Milton's genius; and I ſcruple not to aſſert, that no poem in any language can furniſh ſpecimens of ſublimity equal to thoſe which are to be found in this narration.

This long epiſode, however, which is extended through no fewer than four books, in which, beſide the battles of the angels, Raphael recounts the creation of the heavens and the earth, finiſhes whatever can be called epic in Paradiſe Loſt. The remaining two books are all tragical, and exhibit a mournful ſcene of ruins. Adam and Eve liſten to the temptations with which they are beſet, and the poem haſtens to an unfortunate concluſion.

It appears that Milton was not ſatisfied with the cataſtrophe of his poem, ſo contrary to the termination of all other epic compoſitions of which the iſſue is ſucceſsful. But he was compelled to adopt it from the nature of the ſubject, and the authority of revelation. All he could do was to alleviate the impreſſion which the unfavourable circumſtance might make upon the mind; and this he has endeavoured to accompliſh in ſome meaſure at the expence of the unity of his action. The re-eſtabliſhment of mankind in a ſtate of innocence and happineſs by the interpoſition of Jeſus Chriſt, is no neceſſary part of the fall of man. Yet the poet, to reconcile the reader to the concluſion of the

poem, has taken care very early to hold out this object to his attention; and he has illuſtrated it in conſiderable detail towards the concluſion of the work. In ſpite, however, of all theſe conſolatory conſiderations, with which he endeavours to ſupport the minds of Adam and Eve, and to reconcile them to their fate, the ſad reverſe of fortune they muſt be ſuppoſed to ſuffer, their expulſion from the happy abodes of paradiſe, and the reſentment of Heaven they undergo, cannot fail to leave the reader under a ſpecies of depreſſion which he is unable for ſome time to ſhake off.

LECTURE LIV.

EPIC POETRY—PARADISE LOST—HENRIADE—LUSIAD—LEONIDAS—EPIGONIAD—FINGAL.

WE cannot form conceptions of the characters of ſupernatural beings, except by applying to them the qualities and endowments we diſcover among men. We augment the degree of the quality or endowment, but we aſcribe not to them any excellence of which we have not had experience. In forming a character even of the Almighty himſelf, we cannot proceed in any other manner. We make a collection of the beſt qualities we have ever found in others, or felt in ourſelves; we exalt our conceptions of theſe to the higheſt pitch our imaginations can reach; we conclude, finally, that after raiſing our conceptions to the higheſt pitch, we are ſtill infinitely below the

truth; and this negative imperfect character is the only one we can form of God. Analogous to this is the progrefs of the mind in delineating characters of angelic natures, and even of infernal fpirits. Firft we form human characters of them all, and then we add larger portions of the qualities we afcribe to them, fuitable to the elevation of their natures in the fcale of being.

This fimple theory leads us to an extenfive view of the characters Milton has introduced into Paradife Loft, and of the propriety of the procedure he has followed in defcribing them. Befides the two human actors, all the fupernatural perfonages muft be confidered as conftituting characters in the poem, which have qualities and endowments afcribed to them, upon the principle I have endeavoured to explain. The infernal fpirits form heroic characters of a particular caft; the angels, and even Jefus Chrift, though of oppofite defcriptions, are alfo heroic. The leader of the infernal hoft difcovers feveral qualifications of a hero, activity, refolution, intrepidity; to which are added the love of deftruction, and invincible enmity to goodnefs.

Beelzebub is a combination of a ftatefman and a hero. His valour is not of that combuftible and outrageous fpecies, which diftinguifhes the infernal monarch. His appearance is dignified and fedate, his counfels are profound and deliberate; and,

though rebellion and desolation are their object, wisdom and moderation seem to conduct them.

> "With grave
> Aspect he rose, and in his rising seem'd
> A pillar of state; deep on his front engraven
> Deliberation sat, and public care;
> And princely counsel in his face yet shone
> Majestic, though in ruin."

The character of Moloch is different from either of the former. Fury, violence, and presumption, are the leading features by which he is distinguished. He delights in disorder, devastation, and insult. He treats with contempt the other infernal powers, defies the heavenly host, and Omnipotence itself.

The characters of Michael, of Gabriel, of Jesus Christ, and of the Almighty, are all distinctly and forcibly drawn. The angels are held forth as possessing the most perfect courage, guided by discretion equally remote from presumption and from fear. Steady, cool, decisive, magnanimous, determined to defend the throne of God, and government of heaven, but generous to their adversaries, however undeserving of their favour. Their deeds are not more illustrious than their dispositions are elevated. The character of Jesus Christ, and of the Almighty, are the same as delineated in Holy Scripture. Adam exhibits the most perfect speci-

men of a man, and Eve of a woman, that can be conceived. The allegorical characters of Sin and Death are entitled to no praife. They are improper for epic poetry, as imaginary perfonages; and the delineation is fo fhocking as to excite horror, a paffion too violent to render it of any ufeful or grateful tendency.

From this furvey it will appear, that few epic poems poffefs as much variety of character, fcarcely any more, than Paradife Loft. The different fhades of heroifm are no where fo diftinctly and fo minutely exhibited. Even Homer muft yield precedency to Milton in this particular. The Englifh poet derived this advantage from the large fcale on which he operated, and which enabled him to delineate every gradation of magnanimity his imagination could fuggeft.

Illuftrious, however, as thefe characters certainly are, the powers of the author were adequate to the tafk of fupplying them with fuitable fentiments. In fublimity of every fpecies, Milton fhines unrivalled. The mind of man never afpired to conceptions more magnanimous; the imagination of no poet ever painted with more force and fire. The fentiments of the Satanic hoft teem with that magnitude, and extravagance, and enormity, fo peculiar to their fituations and views; and the reader cannot conceive thoughts and defigns more fuitable to fuch demi-gods, than thofe they enter-

tain and display. Notwithstanding the variety of situations, and the multiplicity of opinions Milton has ascribed to them, I recollect only one instance in which his execution is reprehensible; in which his personages forget their dignity, discover sentiments unbecoming their characters, and improper for the work in which they appear. I mean the comments of the Satanic host on the trivial advantage they appeared to gain over the angelic army in the sixth book. The comments are an attempt at merriment; but they afford a most unfavourable prospect of Milton's talent for that species of amusement. They are a wretched series of detestable puns. The passage begins thus:

> "Leader, the terms we sent were terms of weight,
> Of hard contents, and full of force urg'd home."

But if we overlook this single impropriety, the first, the second, and the sixth books, abound with the noblest specimens of the sublime. The most elevated conceptions, the most daring designs, and the most heroic achievements, every where appear. It is unnecessary to be more particular, or to produce examples. On opening any of the above books, ample satisfaction will be obtained. The vigour of Milton's imagination is no less conspicuous in his descriptions. All his exhibitions of Adam and Eve, of the garden of Eden, and the

ſplendid landſcapes delineated, in the beautiful and inſtructive compariſons which adorn the work, bear teſtimony of the truth of this remark. Nature herſelf ſpeaks to the reader through the paintings of this poet. He appears to be her companion and interpreter, rather than the humble copier of her manner and her ſhape. The moſt pertinent and ſtriking circumſtances are always ſelected, and placed in the moſt favourable light. No general terms, no ſupernumerary or unmeaning epithets, diſgrace his efforts, or diſguſt the reader. All is noble, natural, and elegant.

Were we to cenſure any thing in his compariſons, it would be, that they ſometimes ſavour too much of learning, or they are occaſionally deduced from external objects too remote, and not ſufficiently known. The difficulty, perhaps, of attaining novelty on any other terms, may apologiſe, but it will not altogether excuſe. The greater part of readers cannot perceive the beauty of ſuch compariſons, becauſe they are unacquainted with the ſources from which they are taken.

As I have not heſitated to aſcribe the moſt ample praiſe to the genius of Milton, where it appeared to merit that diſtinction, ſo I ſhall not ſcruple to treat him with a reſpectful freedom, where he ſeems to deſerve cenſure. Every critical judgement muſt be inaccurate, that conſiſts entirely either of praiſe or blame, for no human production

is ſo perfect as to be altogether free from faults. True criticiſm, therefore, can never perform her work with dignity and utility, unleſs ſhe mark what is reprehenſible, as well as point out what is entitled to applauſe. The greater part of the third book, the whole of the eleventh and the twelfth books, appear much inferior to the reſt. The third book, particularly, ſeems to be expoſed to remark.

When Milton introduces God Almighty and Jeſus Chriſt, he generally proceeds with all the decency and reſerve that are obviouſly dictated by the exceedingly delicate nature of the ground on which he treads. He ſeldom preſumes to ſpeak of them in terms, or to make them utter ſentiments, which are not ſuggeſted directly by the ſtyle or the doctrines of ſcripture; and while he aſſumes no greater liberty, he cannot be ſuppoſed to incur much cenſure, although his compoſition is not of the moſt grave and religious kind. The greateſt beings in the univerſe are exhibited with abundance of dignity and propriety, becauſe they appear to maintain and deliver thoſe ſentiments which we have always been taught to conſider as their own. But in the third book, Milton attempts a bolder tone. He ventures to repreſent the Almighty as eſpouſing the tenets of a particular denomination of Chriſtians, as handling all the ſubtilties and dogmas of the moſt abſtract and ſcholaſtic theology. A con-

duct of this species seems to be exceptionable. It diminishes the dignity of the Author of nature, by involving him in controversial and thorny discussions; and it circumscribes our conceptions of his perfect and universal goodness, by displaying him as a partizan of a particular order or description of men. The great Being who made the universe, and who considers the happiness of all his creatures as the object of his care, is debased into a reverend father of the Christian church, or into a zealous reformer of her doctrine and worship, eager indeed to recommend what he held to be true, but actuated by a partiality and confidence in matters of doubtful disputation, which are symptoms of fallibility, rather than of infinite wisdom. Milton, I doubt not, firmly believed the truth of the system he had advanced, but he had no right to retail it from the mouth of the Almighty in other words than those of scripture. A poet of a different sect of Christians might with equal propriety deliver a different system of doctrines from the same mouth, which would produce an inconsistency sufficient to impair, if not to annihilate, the majesty of the Creator of the world.

I have not the objection of impropriety to urge against the sentiments of the two last books. They appear to be destitute of the vigour, elevation, and fire, so happily and fully displayed in the other parts

of the poem, and demanded by the importance and dignity of epic poetry. There is indeed no poet, perhaps, the exertions of whose genius depend more on the nature of his subject, than those of Milton. When the subject is sublime, he maintains a spirit noble and happy; but the same ductility of powers permits his imagination to relax and subside when the matter inspires not similar animation. These books were depressing from their nature, and from the unfortunate effect they were to produce on the conclusion of the poem, contrary to the usual catastrophe of epic compositions. The poet accordingly found himself unable to retain his former vigour of genius. His narration becomes tame and uninteresting; his sentiments are trite and insipid. Sometimes, however, his imagination catches fire, and we recognise with pleasure the genius that dictated so fortunately the magnificent objects of our admiration in the preceding books. The descriptions of Despair and Death tending the couches of the sick, in the eleventh book, afford specimens of this observation. I cannot help remarking, farther, before I leave this view of the poem, that the transformation of the devils into serpents, founded on the form of the animal by which Eve is said to have been tempted in scripture; and the hiss of applause with which they receive Satan on his return to the infernal regions, after accomplishing the seduction of the progenitors of the human race, though

it contributes to ſoften the mournful cataſtrophe of the poem, and ſerves as a ſmall counterpoiſe to the exultation of the Satanic powers on the ſucceſs of their champion, yet it favours more of the marvellous than of the ſublime, and would have been a more graceful production of the genius of Ovid than of Milton.

The merit of the diction of Paradiſe Loſt is of the moſt eminent ſpecies; and no author has known ſo well to call forth the poetical powers of our language. On all his happy occaſions, he is ſure to expreſs himſelf with that dignity, perſpicuity, and harmony, which do the greateſt juſtice to the ſentiments, and convey the moſt ſenſible pleaſure to the ear of the reader. He is fortunate alſo in the uſe of compounded words and figurative expreſſions; but he is peculiarly happy in the variation of his cadences, and in extending the modulation of a period through a ſeries of verſes. In a word, the diction of Milton adapts itſelf, with a large portion of the ductility of the mellifluous tongues of antiquity, to the ſentiments it is employed to expreſs. It roughens with the winds and ſtorms, the raging of a hero, or the noiſe of his arms. It is ſimple and harmonious in delineating the garden of Eden, and the happy domeſtic ſcenes of the progenitors of mankind. It is no mean ſource of praiſe to Milton, that he was the firſt of our poets

who applied blank verfe to epic compofitions, and that the melody of his beft verfification has not been furpaffed by that of any of his fucceffors.

Paradife Regained, I am forry to remark, is not entitled to much notice. It is more a theological, than a poetical performance. It may be prized by the orthodox Chriftian, but will not be anxioufly fought by the reader of delicate imagination. It is executed in the fame ftyle and manner, which appear in the two laft books of Paradife Loft. Occafional eruptions of genius recal the memory of the fublime fcenes we have formerly admired, but they fuggeft alfo a melancholy reflection on the weaknefs of the human powers, and the delicacy of their exertions. We regret that the fame poet who has written fo well, fhould be capable of writing fo ill, but particularly that he fhould be fo bad a judge of his own execution, as to account the merit of his more indifferent performances, fuperior to that of his moft finifhed ones. It is faid that Milton himfelf actually preferred Paradife Regained to Paradife Loft.

Befide thefe epic productions, there are feveral others, both in our own and in foreign languages, of which I have not hitherto taken notice. Of this number are the Henriade of Voltaire, the Lufiad of Camoens, the Leonidas of Glover, the Epigoniad of Wilkie, and the Fingal and Temora of Of-

ſian. It would carry us beyond the bounds allowed to this courſe, were I to enlarge on the execution of each of theſe performances; we muſt therefore be content with a general view of them; and as their merit is not of the ſuperlative ſpecies, ſuch a ſurvey of them will perhaps be judged ſufficient.

The Henriade is by no means deſtitute of epic excellence. It is a ſingular effort of the extenſive genius of its author, who poſſeſſed the uncommon capacity of excelling in every department of letters to which he inclined to apply. The civil war of France under Henry the Fourth, was an unfortunate ſubject, as it was too recent, however ſplendid and important, to admit thoſe liberties with the dates and tranſactions of hiſtory which are neceſſary to conſtitute an intereſting epic fable. The author, accordingly, has been obliged to commit violations of truth, ſo ſtubborn as to deſtroy almoſt the credibility of every incident he had to advance. To procure a pretence for introducing a relation of the war by way of epiſode, the only method by which it could be admitted into the work without deſtroying the unity of the action, he ſcruples not to employ two ſuppoſitions equally contrary to probability and to fact; the firſt, that Henry undertook a journey into England, to ſupplicate the aid of Queen Elizabeth againſt his revolted ſubjects; and the ſecond, that this ſagacious Queen was ſo igno-

rant of the tranſactions of the war, as to find it neceſſary to requeſt him to favour her with a recital of them. The tranſactions, beſides, are in their nature and effects too ſhocking to captivate and intereſt the reader, for ſeldom have there been exhibited ſuch ſcenes of deſolation and cruelty. The deepeſt ſyſtems of diſſimulations, attended with aſſaſſinations, perjuries, treacheries, and every ſentiment and crime which can diſgrace human nature, are the precious objects this epic fable has to diſplay.

Voltaire has alſo been unlucky in his machinery, which conſiſts entirely of allegorical perſonages, ſuch as Diſcord, War, Fanaticiſm, State-Policy, and Love. Theſe beings might be congenial to the events, and they were perhaps the only ones expedient to be introduced; as his countrymen would not have reliſhed a machinery founded upon or deduced from their religious creed; but they are improper to be employed in any tranſaction where the poet intends not to compoſe a fairy tale, but to hold forth a conſiſtent ſtory, which he expects his reader to believe. Voltaire, notwithſtanding all theſe diſadvantages, makes a reſpectable figure as an epic poet. His deſcriptions are bold and lively. His ſentiments are always ſpirited, and ſometimes ſublime. His verſification has all the merit the French language and rhyme can allow.

The Luſiad of Camoens, written in the language

of Portugal, was unknown almost in this country, till it was translated into elegant English verse by the ingenious Mr Mickle. The subject of it is the naval expeditions of the Portuguese about the beginning of the sixteenth century, to discover a passage to the Indian seas. The author displays not a little poetical merit. His characters are well delineated; his descriptions are lively and picturesque; his sentiments are noble and heroic. Like Tasso, he extracts the machinery from the vulgar creed of the times; necromancers, hobgoblins, and ghosts, are the supernatural agents to whom he has recourse, when his human actors are found insufficient to accomplish his purposes. In a word, the merit of Camoens is so considerable, as to entitle him to a larger share of the public approbation than he has hitherto obtained.

The Leonidas of Glover is an epic poem which has received and deserves an eminent share of fame. The subject is happily chosen, for it exhibits the most noble and desperate enterprise, perhaps, ever achieved by a band of heroes, namely, the glorious resistance of four hundred Spartans, under Leonidas, at the Straits of Thermopylæ, against the immense force of Persia. The poet has made some deviations from history, but none that are violent. They consist chiefly of additional circumstances, which are managed with so much propriety and

credibility, that the learned reader overlooks them, while the unlearned reader will not perceive them. As the action is ſplendid and illuſtrious, the characters are heroic, are ſufficiently numerous, are properly varied, and are ſupported with much conſiſtency and energy. Peculiar intereſt is added to the poem by ample delineations of the manners and ſentiments of the luxurious and ſuperſtitious Aſiatics. It is farther enriched by occaſional views of the Egyptian philoſophy, and with accounts of curious productions of nature and art.

Glover certainly cannot be ſaid to rival either Homer or Milton in ſublimity; but neither does he ſink into thoſe occaſional relaxations with which theſe great poets ſometimes ſully their works. He is always decent and dignified. He never falls below mediocrity, and he often riſes above it. He is highly commendable for the pure ſentiments of honour and virtue which pervade his work. Generous deeds, love of country, fidelity to promiſes, regard to truth, moderation in appetites, paſſions, and gratifications of every kind, are the uſeful leſſons he holds forth to the conſideration of his reader. His verſification, though inferior to the beſt of Milton, yet deſerves much praiſe. It is always melodious, occaſionally ſmooth or ſonorous, ſuitable to the ſentiments it has to convey.

The Epigoniad received, and ſtill retains, no

ſmall portion of applauſe. It was unfortunate, however, that the ſubject did not admit of that novelty and intereſt which might arreſt attention. The ſiege of Thebes was an event too diſtant, and too trivial, to excite much curioſity, and the characters were too well known to create much intereſt. The ſame manners, ſentiments, and illuſtrations, which are common in Homer, continually recur to the reader, and he ſeems to peruſe an imitation, if not a copy of the Iliad. If, however, we will make allowances for theſe unfavourable circumſtances, the Epigoniad is not deſtitute of merit. The action is perfectly epic, and properly conducted. The characters and ſentiments are ſuitable to the action. The poetical embelliſhments are animated, and the verſification is ſimple, forcible, and melodious. The epiſode of the death of Hercules is highly finiſhed, is, perhaps, the capital beauty of the work, and is introduced with abundance of propriety.

The poems of Oſſian are a curious literary phænomenon. That in a rude, at leaſt in an age without all ſcience; without any arts, uſeful or ornamental; without means of improvement, but what was derived from reflection, and the contemplation of the works of nature; when all the knowledge and buſineſs of men was to hunt, fight, and love; a poet ſhould ariſe, who could write with a large portion of the fire and ſublimity of Homer; who could

delineate refined sentiments and manners, could paint characters, and describe the beauties of nature with high sensibility, is no less surprising than it is uncommon. In a former part of the course, I advanced some principles to account for this appearance. I must now speak only of the poetical merits of Ossian. Fingal contains several essential requisites of epic poetry. The action possesses greatness and unity, the characters are various and heroic. Much vigour of imagination is found in the sentiments and descriptions. Magnanimity, however, and delicacy, are the leading features of this poet. The generosity and sensibility of his heroes soar to a pitch of disinterestedness and virtue, of which more advanced and corrupted periods of society seem scarcely to entertain conceptions. His thoughts are so elevated and splendid, that a few of them arrest, and appear to exhaust, the powers of attention. He should therefore be read frequently, but with interruptions. Few poets promise more to enlarge the mind, and improve the heart.

LECTURE LV.

DRAMATIC POETRY.

DRAMATIC is the only important ſpecies of poetry of which I have not hitherto treated. I am now to undertake the diſcuſſion of it, and to finiſh this department of the courſe. Dramatic poetry differs from every other ſpecies, both in its form and in its end. Its name is expreſſive of its nature. A fable is invented, and a moral is generally propoſed to be inculcated by the incidents of that fable; but the poet does not relate the ſpeeches and actions of the characters, as in epic poetry. The characters appear, and act, and ſpeak for themſelves.

We cannot wonder that this kind of compoſition has always been exceedingly popular, and has attracted the attention of all ranks of men. The ſtriking imitations of real life it exhibits, the inte-

resting nature of the fable or narration it contains, the brilliancy and splendour which may easily be thrown around the incidents in the representation, take hold of the mind by three of the most powerful springs by which it can be actuated, namely, its love of imitation, its attachment to scenes which rouse the passions, and its fondness for magnificence and show.

But it is not to be imagined, that dramatic poetry could soon reach that degree of eminence which would entitle it to claim much merit in all these respects. Its first essays were rude attempts towards imitation; it was much later before it pretended to appear with dignity on a theatre, and to attack with vigour the passions of the spectators. The origin of tragedy, then, was nothing more respectable than a band of singers, who, daubing their faces with lees of wine, chaunted hymns in honour of Bacchus, at the festivals of that god; and who afterward obtained the name of Chorus on the Greek stage. Thespis, it seems, carried about a band of these singers; and, to add a little variety to the entertainment, or to procure to them some time for repose, he introduced an actor, who related to the audience some interesting tale, or held a dialogue with some of the singers. Horace mentions the practice of Thespis in the following verses:

"Ignotum tragicæ genus inveniſſe camenæ
Dicitur et plauſtris vexiſſe poemata Theſpis,
Qui canerent agerentque peruncti fæcibus ora."

The profeſſed end of Tragedy, the chief branch of dramatic poetry, is the moſt uſeful that can be ſuppoſed; it is no leſs than to habituate the mind to the practice of what is right and good, by exciting and ſtrengthening virtuous paſſions and feelings. It ſurpaſſes the exertions of the moraliſt; for all he attempts is to gain the intereſt of the underſtanding in behalf of virtue, while the tragic poet pretends to engage in his favour the more powerful influence of the heart. The moraliſt inculcates what is decent, convenient, and uſeful, and recommends the practice of it from conſiderations of propriety and virtue. Tragedy attempts to inſure that practice, by invigorating good diſpoſitions, or by debilitating the malevolent paſſions by which it may be oppoſed.

In executing this important taſk, tragedy makes the moſt ſtrenuous attacks upon the heart, and it lays hold of every expedient which may contribute to promote its ſucceſs. It contrives the moſt intereſting ſeries of events that can be imagined, conſiſtently with probability; it makes all theſe events point toward one important cataſtrophe; and it introduces the characters themſelves, not to relate the ſhare they take in the tranſaction of the piece,

but to act their parts, and speak their sentiments, in the presence of the spectators. From the consideration of this end, and these ingredients of tragedy, we may easily deduce the nature of the opinions we are to entertain with respect to its principal parts, its subjects, its unities of action, time, and place, its characters, and its diction.

The subjects of tragedy, it seems, should not be taken from events beyond the bounds of history, nor from events in history, either recent or generally known. In every fable there must be a mixture of history and fiction. History is necessary to convey authority and credibility. Fiction is necessary to supply circumstances sufficient to form an interesting action. Were the subject totally traditionary or fictitious, it would be in a great measure destitute of that authority which is always conferred by a conviction that the ground-work at least is founded on truth. Were it recent and generally known, the mind would revolt against such a mixture of fiction with truth, as is requisite to constitute a captivating fable. The poet, therefore, must compromise the matter as advantageously as he can. He may derive all the authority from history which is consistent with a proper mixture of fiction; but he must not seek more; he must not admit a collision between the two, nor introduce such well-known incidents, as may refuse to asso-

ciate with his fiction, or may hold it forth as extravagant or absurd.

All the best modern tragedies have their subjects chosen according to this rule; and there is no example of an author, who has been successful in working upon recent events. The least dangerous extreme seems to be, to resort to the age of tradition; for it is better to forego the authenticity of history, than to introduce authority which destroys probability. All the Greek tragedians seem to have preferred this extreme; and we find not among their performances which remain, any one, the subject of which is not extracted from tradition, except the Periæ of Æschylus. It was, however, a tradition of equal authority, in many particulars, with that of remote history. It contained the achievements of heroes celebrated by the poems of Homer and Hesiod, which were familiar to the ears of the Greeks, and were generally believed to be founded in truth.

The privilege of adding fiction to real and known events, enables the poet to attack with efficacy the heart of the spectator. He forms from both an action interesting and probable, that is, an action, all the incidents of which shall point to one great object or catastrophe, and which shall be performed, as nearly as possible, in the place, and during the time of the representation. In these requisites will be discovered the foundation of the

three unities of action, time, and place. By unity of action is meant, that all the incidents of the poet shall point to one great cataſtrophe. By the unities of time and place is underſtood, that the actual performance of the action may paſs nearly during the time, and within the place of the repreſentation. Without unity of action, it is impoſſible to excite and agitate the paſſions; and without the unities of time and place, it is impoſſible to preſerve probability, and to perſuade the ſpectators that the action is not imaginary. But with all theſe unities properly combined, the illuſion will be complete, and the paſſions will be as effectually rouſed by the feigned events, as if they were real.

With regard to the unities of time and place, moſt of the ancient tragedies are wonderfully perfect. The action might actually paſs very nearly within the place, and in the time of the repreſentation. Their ſcene ſeems ſeldom to have been ſhifted, and the chorus appears never to have left the ſtage during the whole courſe of the performance. This arrangement aroſe from the nature of the Greek theatre, and the manner of conducting its repreſentations. The Greeks had not learned to aboliſh the chorus, even in the days of Sophocles and Euripides; and, of courſe, all their tragedies were in part muſical entertainments. The time allotted to the buſineſs was ſhorter than it

generally is among the moderns, and it was of courfe eafier to find an action, which might afford incidents fufficient to form an interefting drama. Befides, in fpite of all our veneration for the genius of Greece, and the high applaufe continually paid to the tragedies of that polifhed people, it muft be admitted, that it is not very difficult to form plays, accurate in the unities of time and place, if we were permitted to proceed in the compofition of them, as has frequently been done both by Sophocles and Euripides. The greater part of the tragedies of Sophocles, and feveral of thofe of Euripides, are mere dialogues, on interefting topics indeed; but there is in them very little plot or difcovery, and lefs cataftrophe. The parties enter in diftrefs, talk feelingly about their misfortunes, and the audience leaves them pretty much as it found them.

The greater length of modern tragedies, and the much greater variety of bufinefs they generally contain, render it more difficult to conftruct them in fuch a manner as to attain equal perfection in the unities, and violations of them are accordingly found in feveral of our beft plays. Many of our tragedies prefent an under plot, not always fubfervient to the principal one; all admit fome latitude in the change of place, and demand at leaft twenty-four hours for the time of the action.

Conſidering the improbabilities which muſt be admitted in every repreſentation, ſuch as, that players are kings and queens, or ſtateſmen; that the play-houſe is a priſon or a palace; and that candle-light is that of the ſun; it may appear, perhaps, that we are too ſqueamiſh about the unities, and that greater liberties might reaſonably be indulged, than thoſe I have mentioned, and which are permitted by the rules of Ariſtotle. It would be fruitleſs to undertake a diſcuſſion of this point, about which different judgements may be expected to be entertained, as the principles of deciſion are undetermined or undefined; but there are extremes which every critic muſt diſapprove. The capital blemiſhes of the plays of Shakſpeare, are violations of the unities, particularly thoſe of time and place; and his deviations in theſe articles are ſo enormous and ſhocking, that, were not his poetical powers among the moſt eminent which ever appeared on the ſtage, they muſt long ago have ſunk his productions into oblivion. In the tragedy of Jane Shore, alſo, the author ſcruples not to require the audience to believe, that they have remained aſſembled till the heroine, whom they have beheld in health and ſtrength through a great part of the play, dies in the laſt act literally of hunger. Such improbabilities diſſipate infallibly the theatrical illuſion, as every reflection and feeling of the ſpectators muſt refute the ſuppoſition of the author.

The conceſſions inſeparable from the exiſtence of theatrical compoſition, ſuch as thoſe formerly mentioned, are much more allowable, becauſe neceſſity may be urged in their behalf; and every audience is accuſtomed to grant them. But unexpected inconſiſtencies in the courſe of the action are of the worſt conſequence, as they compel the ſpectator to reflect and to reaſon, the moſt fatal operations to the ſucceſs of the poet, which never fail to check the courſe of paſſion, and to diſſolve the theatrical charm. Accordingly, in many of our beſt tragedies, thoſe particularly of Otway, ſeveral of thoſe of Rowe, the Mourning Bride of Congreve, and in all the later productions of this claſs, many of which poſſeſs no ſmall ſhare of merit, the obſervation of the unities is pretty complete. In a word, it would be unreaſonable to exclude from the ſtage many performances of much merit in other articles, on account of violations of the unities. We may, however, conclude with confidence, that in equal circumſtances as to other articles, the fewer and leſs exceſſive theſe violations are, the production will be more perfect.

As tragedy received birth from an inclination to vary the entertainment of the chorus at the feſtivals of Bacchus, ſo the chorus ſeems to have been retained on the Greek theatre with a view to relieve the performers, and to vary

a little the reprefentation of tragedy. The ancients had no inftrumental mufic between the acts of their theatrical exhibitions, and it was neceffary that both the actors and the audience fhould be allowed fome time to repofe and relax themfelves. The chief bufinefs of the chorus was to amufe the audience in thefe intervals of relaxation. They fung odes in honour of the gods or heroes connected with the piece, fuggefted moral reflections to the fpectators, commiferated the unfortunate, or fignified their difapprobation of cruelty or injuftice; but they never intermeddled with the bufinefs, unlefs in the prefence of the characters of the action. Thefe prerogatives of the chorus are beautifully defcribed by Horace in the following lines of his Art of Poetry.

"Actoris partes chorus officiumque virile
Defendat; neu quid medios intercinat actus,
Quod non propofito conducat et hæreat apte.
Ille bonis faveatque, et concilietur amicis;
Et regat iratos, et amet peccare timentes.
Ille dapes laudet menfæ brevis: ille falubrem
Juftitiam, legefque, et apertis otia portis.
Ille tegat commiffa, deofque precetur et oret,
Ut redeat miferis, abeat fortuna fuperbis."

But, as the chorus rarely retired from the ftage, their prefence muft have been the fource of feveral inconveniencies. The fcene could not eafily be

ſhifted, and it was neceſſary to eſtabliſh it in ſome public place, as a hall, a court, a ſtreet, to which many perſons might readily have acceſs. The chorus knew the whole buſineſs of the piece, and muſt, of courſe, be ſuppoſed to be witneſſes of tranſactions which one of the parties wiſhed to conceal. For this reaſon, they muſt have been often tempted either to betray their fidelity to one party, by revealing their ſecrets, or to give offence to the other party, by concealing tranſactions of which the latter was exceedingly anxious to obtain information. The only principle of conduct they could adopt, was to hold out the character they ſuſtained for honour and ſecrecy as a reaſon for the moſt profound ſilence; but men under the influence of ſtrong paſſion, ſometimes regard not much the principles of veracity, when theſe interrupt their deſigns. As, then, the functions of the chorus are better ſupplied by a dependant or a confidant, as the intervals between the acts are occupied by muſic, and as ſeveral inconveniencies attended the chorus in its moſt unexceptionable form, we cannot queſtion the judgement of modern authors, who have diſcontinued that appendage.

Ariſtotle long ago obſerved, that tragedy operates her important purpoſe of refining the human heart, by exciting and agitating the paſſions of pity and terror; and the critics have been at much pains to

tell us what is abundantly plain, that by pity is meant the ſympathetic and tender paſſions; by terror the apprehenſion of pain, misfortune, or miſery. By engaging the ſympathetic paſſions, it ſtrengthens that part of our conſtitution which has the happineſs of our fellow-creatures for its object, and which, from our partial regards to ourſelves, we are exceedingly diſpoſed to allow to languiſh. By rouſing our apprehenſions of pain, misfortune, or miſery, it fortifies us againſt temptations to folly and iniquity, which tend immediately to generate theſe fatal conſequences. By theſe means, tragedy contributes to maintain the balance of our conſtitutions, and to perform the moſt eſſential ſervice to ſociety. It tends to render us happy in ourſelves, and uſeful to others.

It is vain to urge againſt the utility of ſuch theatrical repreſentations, that they are unneceſſary, and that the real miſeries and errors of human life, which might improve our ſympathy and diſcretion, are ſo numerous as to need no addition from the field of fancy and poetical fiction. But few real events are calculated to operate the effects of tragedy. They are either of that violent kind which altogether depreſs the mind for a certain time, or they are attended with circumſtances of folly, cruelty, or injuſtice, which ſhock and revolt the feelings; or they are ſo deſtitute of incidents to agitate and intereſt the paſſions, as not to be fit for the purpoſes

of improvement. In the conftruction of a tragedy, every improper fentiment and fituation may be excluded, every favourable fentiment and fituation may be introduced, and may be held forth with full advantage. The poet poffeffes every avenue to the human heart he can reafonably defire; and if he takes not entire poffeffion of it, he has himfelf only to blame. He has all nature before him, and every circumftance at his command; let him feign only with intereft and probability, and he cannot fail to be fuccefsful.

Neither is it a good objection againft the propriety of theatrical compofitions, that they have been fometimes abufed, and that, inftead of fupporting the caufe of truth and virtue, they have exhibited examples, and inculcated principles, which contribute to pervert the judgement, and corrupt the heart. If abufe were a valid objection againft the ufe of any thing, there is nothing valuable, the ufe of which would not be interdicted. The beft things are naturally liable to the greateft abufes. Every mode of inculcating virtue and truth, the pulpit itfelf not excepted, has been abufed; and it is not to be expected, that dramatic productions fhould be exempted from the general fate. The fair method of eftimating the real merit of any inftrument of improvement, is to appeal to the means it employs, and the end it propofes when

properly applied; and when tried by this equitable ſtandard, every candid judge muſt allow the pretenſions of tragedy to be extremely high.

When we examine the moral tendency of tragedy in ancient and modern times, we find that no characters and ſentiments are more irreproachable than thoſe of the Greek tragedians. Their characters ſometimes preſent ſentiments and actions which ſhock or diſguſt, but they never diſcover ambiguous or relaxed principles, nor exhibit example to corrupt the heart. All the ſongs of the chorus are leſſons of the pureſt morality; virtuous characters are never oppreſſed for the practice of integrity; vicious ones are delineated as objects of averſion. Poetical juſtice is generally adminiſtered at the concluſion of the piece, the virtuous characters are rewarded, and the vicious are conſigned to puniſhment.

I am ſorry to be obliged to remark, that all modern tragic poets have not been equally attentive to the intereſts of virtue. They ſeem, on many occaſions, to have been more diſpoſed to exhibit characters as they are in life, than to repreſent them as they ought to be. I mean not that the characters of tragedy ſhould not be thoſe of real life, but that ſuch only ſhould be choſen, as may not hurt the intereſts of virtue and ſociety. What apology, then, can be offered for characters of ambiguous reputation, who utter ſentiments tinged

with licentiousness, and produce scenes which infect the principles and the heart. Otway is exposed to censure on this article; and it is much to be regretted, that a genius so conspicuous for theatrical merit should have been such an equivocal friend of virtue. Many of the sentiments in the Orphan are exceedingly indelicate; and, though the passions are agitated to their full tumult of emotion, as Thomson expresses it, yet there is something so ferocious, if not shocking, in the catastrophe, as to efface much of the impression the piece might otherwise convey.

In Venice Preserved, the principal characters, and the favourites of the audience, are extremely exceptionable, both in political and moral principles. On pretence of provocation, arising from disappointed ambition, they engage in a conspiracy to destroy the constitution of their country, and to put to death every citizen who should venture to oppose their designs. The traitors are indeed detected, and brought to punishment, but the poet is blameable for delineating them with commendable qualities, which attract approbation. The feelings excited, the principles and example inculcated, in the course of a dramatic production, remain longest with the audience; and they find it difficult to distinguish, in the same characters, between qualities they should approve, and those they should disapprove. If they approve the fidelity

and generofity of the traitor, they will look with a favourable eye on his treafon; and if any performance contributes to leffen abhorrence of a crime deftructive of fociety, it is no friend to the happinefs of mankind.

For the honour of the later productions of the theatre, it muft be acknowledged, that they difplay the moft friendly afpect to virtue. They exhibit great decency and delicacy in the fentiments, and they contain no exceptionable characters.

LECTURE LVI.

DRAMATIC POETRY—TRAGEDY.

AS the object of tragedy is to intereſt the paſſions, and to mend the heart, it will readily appear, that characters of a particular kind only can be ſubſervient to theſe important purpoſes. To behold an imprudent or a vicious man obnoxious to the natural conſequences of his folly or his crimes, produces little emotion, except pity mixed with contempt, and a conſideration of the juſtice of Heaven, that permits not, even in this world, bad men to live unpuniſhed. On the other hand, to ſurvey a man of public ſpirit and pure virtue expoſed to diſtreſs, may excite admiration of the virtue of the ſufferer, indignation againſt his perſecutors and tormentors, or diſtruſt of the management of Providence, which allows ſo much merit to be unfortunate. But in neither caſe are

the emotions of ſympathy and terror powerfully rouſed, nor is the heart much improved by the ſpectacle. In the former caſe, we conclude that our innocence and diſcretion will preſerve us from thoſe enormities and follies which have deſervedly brought miſery on the offenders; in the latter, we hope that the world is not generally ſo abandoned, as to torment us with perſecution, if we continue inoffenſive and innocent.

Hence it appears, that neither very vicious nor very virtuous characters are fit for tragedy; becauſe the great body of mankind, and the greater part of the ſpectators of theatrical performances, are not ſuch characters. Corrupted as we repreſent the heart of man to be, few even of the worſt of men are completely wicked. Temptation ſeduces them, folly miſguides them, imprudence ſuſpends the operation of their rational powers; but they are never almoſt vicious, and ſeldom fooliſh, without the proſpect of perſonal advantage or gratification. The worſt of men commonly have in them ſomething good, the beſt are ſtained with ſome imperfections. The far greater part of mankind, I hope, for the honour of human nature, would chuſe rather to be good than bad, if they could believe they might gain their ends as effectually by the practice of integrity, as by the commiſſion of iniquity.

There is no principle relative to human nature

better eſtabliſhed than this, that we can be deeply concerned for the fate of no man, whoſe character does not in ſome meaſure reſemble our own, or concerning whoſe conduct we may not reaſonably conclude, that we might have acted the ſame part, had we been ſurrounded with the ſame circumſtances and motives. This principle points out the moſt proper characters for tragedy. They ſhould be poſſeſſed of high virtues, to intereſt the ſpectators in their happineſs; but they ſhould be exhibited as liable to errors and indiſcretions, ariſing from the weakneſs of human nature, the violence of paſſion, or the intemperate purſuit of objects commendable and uſeful. The misfortunes of ſuch perſons properly painted, and artfully heightened, take hold of the mind with irreſiſtible effect. They engage every ſympathetic feeling of the ſoul, and they make us tremble, leſt, by our indiſcretion in ſimilar indulgence of our paſſions, we ſhould throw ourſelves into ſimilar diſtreſs.

The beſt tragic poets have been ſo ſenſible of the propriety of introducing characters of the kind I have delineated, that few inſtances occur of deviations from this practice. All the moſt pathetic tragedies abound with characters adorned with noble endowments and ſentiments, but who, from the delicacy of their feelings, or the fallibility of human virtue, have involved themſelves in circumſtances attended with exquiſite diſtreſs. Their

hearts are diſtracted by the alternate prevalence of tender and violent paſſions. Under the abhorrence of iniquity, they are hurried into crimes. Animated with the moſt ſincere reſpect for the laws of God and man, they are prompted, in an unguarded hour, to violate both. Shakſpeare above all poets underſtood this fundamental principle in the conſtruction of dramatic characters. Lear, Othello, and Hamlet, are conſpicuous inſtances. They are indeed very different characters, but they all poſſeſs thoſe high notions of honour and integrity, thoſe noble and ſincere reſolutions to promote the happineſs of ſociety, and the practice of virtue, which intereſt us deeply in their welfare; while their inattention to the intrigues and ſiniſter views of deſigning men, added to the unſuſpicious rectitude of their own hearts, plunge them into errors, and precipitate them into crimes, that even ambiguous virtue would heſitate to commit.

The Cato of Addiſon is almoſt the only exception I recollect to the doctrine that has been advanced. Cato is a perfect moral character. All his actions are guided by the pure dictates of reaſon and philoſophy; his attachments and paſſions are all brought under perfect ſubjection to his reaſon. He may err, but he errs not like other men, ſeduced by his hopes, or influenced by his fears. He judges like a pure intelligence, and he errs becauſe human reaſon is not infallible. But it is eaſy to

perceive how unfit fuch a character is for tragedy. His fufferings excite our admiration, not our compaffion; and he makes a more confpicuous and fuitable figure in the heroic poem of Lucan, than in the tragedy of Addifon. He is too perfect to be affected with his own calamities; and the conftitution of human nature permits us not to commiferate a fufferer who feels not for himfelf. The tragedy of Cato, accordingly, is a cold philofophical production, and it feems not in the power of any performers to render it interefting, though they may excite admiration and heroic fentiments.

As tragedy pretends to improve by example, as well as by exercifing virtuous feelings and paffions, it may be thought, perhaps, that we fhould affume her characters from the inferior ftations of life, in which, by the diftribution of Providence, the greater part of mankind are fituated, and the example may be expected to be moft extenfively interefting and inftructive. That the capital characters of tragedy might be found in fuch ftations, is not to be doubted, from the fuccefs of George Barnwell, or the London Apprentice. But fuch characters are not the beft calculated for exciting the paffions; becaufe they are not fufceptible of that great reverfe of fortune, to which elevated rank is expofed in diftrefs. A calamity incident to a perfon in an eminent ftation, infpires and excites more fympathy than if an ordinary perfon were the fufferer; be-

caufe the former is fuppofed to be endued with fuperior fenfibility, and to be lefs prepared for diftrefs, as he might account himfelf more exempted from its attacks.

The misfortunes of perfons of high rank are more interefting for another reafon, they are more extenfive. Their good or bad fuccefs may involve the fate of nations, or the happinefs or mifery of large bodies of their fellow-creatures. Though fuch characters, then, fhould not be admitted to communicate the moft ufeful leffons by example, yet we cannot doubt that they are beft adapted to intereft and improve the heart; and if both thefe ends cannot be attained by the fame means, and in the fame performance, we will not hefitate to prefer the latter. The benefit which can be gained by example is fimilar to that derived from the moral, inculcated by the cataftrophe of the plot. In both cafes, we may be reminded of fome profitable inftruction; but it muft be of inferior importance to the difcipline which exercifes and improves the paffions. The more exalted the fituation and fenfibility of the perfonage we commiferate, the greater the reverfe of fortune he fuftains, the more will our paffions be engaged, and the greater will be the improvement we may attain. It is of much lefs confequence to inculcate morality, than to habituate men to its practice.

With refpect to the diction of tragedy.—It fhould

never be forgotten that a tragedy is intended to exhibit an action, not a dialogue; and that all the speeches and sentiments should be prompted by the action. Every play should comprehend as much business as is requisite to occupy the attention of the audience during the time of the representation; and no more words should be used than are requisite to carry it on. The entrance and exit of every character should be regulated by the same principle. Nobody should enter without having something to do; nobody should depart without a similar reason for his absence. Nothing is more improper, nothing is more repugnant to the course of passion, than that the characters should hold argumentative or declamatory dialogues with one another, and should pretend to amuse or to please the spectators by their ingenuity or their eloquence.

Many modern tragedies are not a little reprehensible in this article. Many speeches, many entire scenes in them, are no better than conversation-pieces. The business stands still, while the stage rings with declamation. I might specify some of the plays of Thomson, of Rowe, even of Otway. Both Corneille and Racine are here exceedingly obnoxious to censure. All their plays abound with declamation, all their characters are eloquent. Their scenes are a series of splendid dialogues, where every speaker almost utters the same lofty

or brilliant phraseology, and discovers an ambition to dazzle more than to interest, to captivate the fancy rather than the heart. The pomp of versification, and the ornaments of eloquence, may impose on the unexperienced spectator, and may induce him to think that he hears the voice of nature, and the expression of passion; but nothing is more disgusting to a polished taste. A single page of the simple and artless language of the heart will outweigh volumes of such tumid finery. The tragedies, however, of Voltaire deserve to be exempted from this censure. That author, singular in many articles, introduced a revolution in the theatrical composition of France. He banished a great deal of that sparkling and inflated dialogue, which disfigures the composition of his countrymen. He found the means of attaching his audience to his action more than to his language; and he has often been fortunate in the sentiments and expression of passion.

To interest an audience completely, the grand requisite is, to make the characters feel the distress they suffer, and to express those feelings with propriety and energy. Without a considerable portion of this talent, no tragic poet can gain much fame. He may imagine the most captivating series of events that ever filled the plot of a play; but, unless the passions speak their natural language, the audience will remain unaffected. On the other

hand, if the characters feel and utter the sentiments of the heart, it is not in the power of the audience to remain uninterested.

The error most frequent in the execution of this part of the dramatic art, is to substitute description in the room of the language of passion. The author relinquishes the sympathy of the heart, and resorts to the vigour of the imagination. He finds, though he cannot command the sentiments and language suitable to the situation he exhibits, from a defect in his sensibility, yet that he can form a very lively picture of the looks, attitudes, and actions it requires. He does, then, all he can; he makes his characters describe themselves like spectators, instead of communicating the sentiments their circumstances should suggest.

A practice of this sort is the bane of tragedy; and no merit in point of contrivance, or arrangement of incidents; no ornaments derived from the most brilliant displays of imagination; no excellence of moral tendency; no beauty of expression, can compensate the defect. But if, on the contrary, the language and sentiments of passion shall properly appear, they will overbalance every imperfection; they will reconcile us to the grossest absurdities in the contrivance and arrangement of incidents; they will reconcile us to the violation of all the rules of dramatic composition; they will

reconcile us to the moſt ridiculous and eccentric of all kinds of compoſition, the mixture of tragedy and comedy in the ſame piece.

Here, then, is the point of view in which we deſcry the incomparable merit of Shakſpeare. In every other article, unleſs in expreſſing the ſentiments and the language of paſſion, he is one of the moſt exceptionable writers of tragedy ever attempted to pleaſe an audience. But in this line of compoſition, he outſhines all poets of every ſpecies, ancient or modern. I will venture to affirm, that there are more juſt copies of the human heart in his works, than in any other poet, Homer himſelf not excepted; and that, in ſpite of the defects his works contain, in ſpite of the numerous and groſs abſurdities in the conſtruction of his plots, he is well entitled to the high reputation he poſſeſſes among all good judges of dramatic merit. It would be endleſs to produce examples. He ſeems to have the operations of the heart entirely at his command, and to delineate them with a facility inſtantaneous and unerring. He ſeldom fails in any attempt, and his attempts are as various and as numerous as are the paſſions, and the ſhades of paſſion, which actuate the mind of man.

Though moral reflections appear with propriety in tragedy, and though the cataſtrophe of the action may with much advantage and efficacy in

culcate fome important moral leffon, yet they are not its capital beauties; and they fhould be fparingly introduced in the progrefs of the bufinefs. Men under the influence of paffion have no leifure for moralizing, which is the operation of a mind cool, and difpofed to reflection; and if it be impertinently introduced and impreffed, it will revolt the audience, and will probably make them naufeate the inftruction which they ought to improve and to follow. Even the general moral inculcated by the cataftrophe is of utility, only as it refults from the various paffions and feelings which have been excited during the reprefentation. The audience or the reader obferve with pleafure the tendency of the action to recommend fome important moral rule, and it has then the higheft chance of being deeply imprinted on the mind. But if the performance be properly conducted, it will hardly be neceffary to point out this rule or principle; it will fummon attention from the train of the events, and if it does not do fo, the moft careful recommendation of it will not make much impreffion.

To agitate the paffions completely, and to triumph over the feelings of the audience, the poet is frequently obliged to terminate his performance unhappily, that is, with the deftruction, the death, or the banifhment of the principal perfonages of

the drama. Though we cannot doubt that a friend to virtue will adminiſter poetical juſtice, as far as it is conſiſtent with the chief end of tragedy, yet it will readily appear, that this end cannot be attained, if ſuch retribution muſt always take place. If the audience are certain, at the beginning of the action, that all events, however unfortunate in the courſe of it, ſhall terminate happily for the virtuous characters, they will not be deeply affected about the ſufferance of calamities, which they know muſt ſoon come to a favourable iſſue. It would therefore be exceedingly erroneous to adopt the idea of poetical juſtice in every inſtance, as it would infer in a great meaſure the deſtruction of the effect of tragedy. At the ſame time, nothing prohibits the occaſional practice of it; and we find that ſome modern, and ſeveral ancient tragedies, terminate fortunately. A play conducted on the theory of perfect retribution, may contribute to reconcile the mind to virtue, and to inſpire it with favourable opinions of the government of the world; but this theory is not always conſonant to the courſe of nature, which frequently permits the good man to be the victim of diſtreſs; becauſe the ſyſtem of Providence will not be completed, till the adminiſtration of the future world is added to that of the preſent.

LECTURE LVII.

DRAMATIC POETRY—COMEDY AND OPERA.

THE ſame rules which preſerve conſiſtency and probability in tragedy, are requiſite to ſupport theſe qualities in comedy. The action of a comedy ſhould have as much unity, and ſhould paſs as nearly in the place, and during the time of the repreſentation, as that of tragedy.

The deſign of comedy is, to exhibit agreeable pictures of poliſhed life, and to ridicule follies and ſingularities, whether in character, manner, opinion, or conduct. It attacks with propriety and ſucceſs affectation, levity, diſſipation, and unreaſonable attachments of every ſort; but the gaiety of the compoſition ſeldom permits it to become ſerious, and it never preſumes to reprehend thoſe crimes, or to excite thoſe paſſions, about which the moraliſt and the tragic poet are

converſant. Comedy operates her effect by addreſſing chiefly the ſenſe of ſhame, which deters men from performing what may render them contemptible or fooliſh in the eyes of the world. By expoſing ſingularities, ſhe is almoſt certain of reforming them, at leaſt of reſtraining the open practice of them. She may even aſſail crimes, as far as they are aſſailable, by ridicule, or the oddity of their appearance.

As the profeſſed purpoſe of comedy is to extirpate folly, vanity, and ſingularity, the ſcene ſhould always be laid in preſent times, and the characters ſhould be thoſe of the current age. It is of no conſequence to ridicule manners that are obſolete and generally unknown; the efforts of the poet for that end would be prepoſterous, and his work could not engage attention. To excite laughter, the object muſt be folly and vanity, with which we are acquainted; and ſo powerful is this engine in the hands of a man of wit and humour, that no offender almoſt poſſeſſes effrontery ſufficient to contemn it.

As the deſign of comedy is to attack ſingularity and impropriety in all ranks of life, the characters, accordingly, are aſſumed from all ſtations of ſociety. In genteel comedy, the principal characters are taken from the higher orders of the community; and, in their intercourſe, the poet has an opportunity of exhibiting ſpecimens of all the more ſhining qualities which adorn polite life, refined

manners, brilliant difplays of wit and humour, fhrewd obfervations on characters, fentiments, and actions.

To difplay the characters with advantage, they muft be exhibited in a variety of interefting lights, but they muft never become fo ferious as to excite any violent emotion. The action of a comedy commonly terminates in marriage, or in the reformation of fome of the vices or follies of the married ftate, and the bufinefs affords a large field for difplaying many of the caprices and indifcretions of which the greater part of mankind are guilty, in thofe periods of life when the natural difpofitions of the mind are moft apt to difclofe themfelves. Actions which terminate in marriage exhibit curious pictures of the inclinations and profpects, averfions and motives, obftacles and intrigues, which operate between the fexes, in their attachments to one another. Actions which terminate in the reformation of the indifcretions of the married ftate, exhibit ftriking views of the caufes and the confequences of thefe indifcretions, and of the means by which they are committed. But the embarraffments of comedy muft all be diffipated at the conclufion of the piece, for the natural gaiety of this fpecies of compofition admits only a fortunate termination, and requires that every character fhall then be made as happy as circumftances will allow.

The unity of action neceffary in comedy muft

not, however, be fo ftrictly interpreted, as to limit it to one matrimonial project. This would not afford bufinefs fufficient to occupy the attention of an audience during the time of reprefentation; and for this reafon, two of thefe projects among the capital perfonages, with one of the fame kind among the fubordinate characters, are frequently going on together in the beft Englifh comedies.

Confidering the gaiety of the fubjects of comedy, and the vivacity of the characters it exhibits, it will readily appear, that it is not a little prone to deviate into levity and licentioufnefs, the bane of this fpecies of compofition. If regulated by the rules of decency and propriety, it is calculated to operate happy effects; it amufes, it exhilarates, it polifhes, it corrects, and even inftructs. But if it be permitted to infinuate equivocal or exceptionable fentiments, to prefent doubtful examples, in characters who poffefs eminent merits, but who indulge or defend the violations of delicacy and decorum; if indecency be tolerated either in words or actions, it becomes a poifon of the moft infectious and corrupting nature that can affail the mind of man.

It is much to be regretted, that the indecencies and improprieties of this fpecies of the drama chiefly, fhould have afforded fo much reafon to many well-difpofed people, to exclaim againft the entertainments of the theatre, one of the moft

rational and unexceptionable amuſements, when properly conducted, which ſociety can preſent. Theſe indecencies deſerve no quarter, but there is no neceſſary connection between them and a theatrical performance. A poliſhed age, and an opulent people, muſt have amuſements, and will reſort to them in oppoſition to every remonſtrance of the theologian, or argument of the moraliſt. The theatre has always been, and doubtleſs will continue to be, the favourite entertainment of ſuch a ſtate of ſociety. If properly conducted, the moraliſt has no juſt reaſon to complain. No other entertainment can ſupply as much amuſement and inſtruction; it may furniſh a ſchool of politeneſs, decency, and even virtue.

In no age, however, has comedy ſo juſtly aſpired to fame as in the preſent. Neither Greece nor Rome can exhibit her in colours ſo attractive, and in attitudes ſo captivating, as we now behold her. Though antiquity may rival, perhaps ſometimes ſurpaſs us, in tragedy, our ſuperiority in comedy will admit little controverſy. We will not preſume to ſeek a reaſon of this phenomenon in any difference of ancient genius. It is to be expected only from the circumſtances of ſociety, the difference of ancient and modern manners; and in them we diſcover a ſatisfactory ſolution.

As the deſign of comedy is to hold forth a picture of the manners of the times, and of thoſe

ſingularities or follies which attract public attention, it perhaps accompliſhes this end more completely than any other ſpecies of writing. Even hiſtory ſeems not to be compared with comedy in this reſpect. Hiſtory ſeizes the great, political, and military tranſactions of nations. It delineates the characters of princes, ſtateſmen, and warriors; but the manners and cuſtoms of the greater part of the people, even their arts, induſtry, and modes of life, ſeldom become objects of her attention. Comedy marks the general ſtate of manners and refinement. She exhibits the humours and peculiarities, and even the vices of an age, and diſtinguiſhes the rudeneſs or delicacy with which gratifications are enjoyed or purſued. If ſociety is unpoliſhed, if taſtes and entertainments are coarſe or indelicate, if vulgar wit, low humour, pointed conceits prevail, or if decency, vivacity, genuine wit and humour, characteriſe not the free intercourſe of the ſexes, comedy will partake the qualities of her age, and will be leſs entitled to regard; and ſuch, I think, muſt be allowed to be the deſcription of all the comedy which has deſcended to us from ancient times.

It is unfortunate that we have been gratified with no ſpecimens of the moſt poliſhed comedy of Greece. We have been favoured only with the names of the authors, (Diphilus, Menander, Demophilus), by their profeſſed tranſlators Plautus and

Terence. We have to regret farther, that no comedy of the moſt refined period of Rome has deſcended to poſterity, if ſo buſy an age admitted ſuch compoſitions. The only productions of antiquity, which have any juſt claim to our attention, are thoſe of the Roman authors I have mentioned; for the performances of Ariſtophanes, if we except the purity of their ſtyle, ſeem undeſerving of the leaſt notice. Now, from what we know of the manners of the moſt refined comedy of Greece by the tranſlations of Plautus and Terence, and from what we know of the moſt poliſhed periods of the Greek and Roman manners by other means, we have reaſon to expect no pictures of manners more cultivated, than thoſe preſerved by theſe comedians.

The unpoliſhed ſtate of ancient manners aroſe chiefly from the ſevere reſtrictions which fettered the intercourſe between the ſexes, and which modern refinement has contrived to conduct with much more freedom and propriety. Among the Greeks and Romans, women of decency and virtue were ſcarcely permitted to partake of promiſcuous entertainments, or to act a part in parties of innocent amuſement. They ſeldom appeared in public, except at religious feſtivals, or ſolemn proceſſions, and even then they intermingled not with the other ſex, but aſſociated apart by themſelves. They were ſcarcely conſidered as the companions

and friends of men, and were not often admitted to their ſociety. They were treated as uſeful ſuperintendants of domeſtic affairs, and were guided by authority rather than advice. Correſpondent are the manners we behold in Plautus and Terence. Theſe authors knew nothing of what is now accounted genteel comedy, in which people of both ſexes, of high breeding, refined manners, wit and humour, combine their talents and exertions, in innocent parties of feſtivity and mirth. If they produce a female of innocence, which they rarely do, ſhe is inanimate, inſipid, and deſtitute of all the amiable qualities of fancy and underſtanding. If they exhibit a woman poſſeſſed of any of theſe qualities, ſhe is debaſed with the ignominy of a proſtitute; for they ſcruple not to avow their introduction of ſuch exceptionable characters.

Beſides this deplorable view of the female part of the human race in theſe authors, we find an uniformity of vulgar humour and manners, even in the male part. An old fond father, who is impoſed upon by a ſon, or a ſlave, or by both in conjunction, is uſually held forth for the entertainment of the audience. Every play is commonly provided with a paraſite and a pimp, who carry on the buſineſs, and provide precious amuſement for the ſpectators. Plautus ſometimes ſcruples not to intermix the intrigues of the gods with thoſe of his characters. Jupiter and Mercury combine to ſe-

duce the wife of Amphitruo. The true Amphitruo finally appears, and the chief diversion of the audience arises from the difficulty he has to evince his identity, after Jupiter has seduced his wife by assuming his appearance, while Mercury personated Sosia his servant.

We may discern, however, in these writers, manifest traces of genius, and a progress of manners. Both exhibit many simple and striking characters, which we discover to be taken from real life by the consistency and peculiarities which they present. They do abundance of honour to the imagination and judgement of the authors; and we regret that these had not more perfect originals to copy. The taste, the manners, and the style of Terence are more polished and refined than those of Plautus; and if both translated, at least copied, from Greek authors of the same age and similar genius, the difference, it seems, must be ascribed to the superior refinement of the former, or of the later age in which he lived.

The high polish of modern manners has carried comedy to a pitch of perfection unknown to the ancients, and has exhibited specimens of genius and taste which deserve much commendation. The French and the English have shone most conspicuously in this line. Of the French, Moliere is perhaps the most eminent. His characters are exquisite pictures of nature, and every singularity

and folly he has attacked, he has expofed with much humour and addrefs. Few authors have difplayed as much wit and fenfibility, conjoined with equal attachments to the interefts of virtue and decency. All his plays have the moft direct tendency to polifh or improve the audience or the reader by promoting innocent mirth, and by ridiculing hypocrify, affectation, vanity, and folly. All his delineations are natural and lively, and he feldom degenerates into quaintnefs or conceit. He poffeffes in a high degree the exquifite art of heightening the oddity of a character, by little picturefque circumftances, which often difplay the feelings more effectually than actions and fentiments of much mere importance. His Avare, Tartuffe, and Femmes Servantes, afford many examples of thefe remarks.

We regret that the Englifh poets, with fuperior force of genius, wit, and humour, poffefs not always equal regard for the interefts of decency and virtue. Few of their beft comedies are exempted from the reproach of licentioufnefs, and fome of them fhock every principle of decency and decorum. It is fcarcely poffible to imagine more comic merit, conjoined with every loofe and equivocal fentiment and action, than we find in the comedies of Congreve. No comic poet, perhaps, poffeffes as much wit; he abounds with more of it than moft readers can relifh. No characters are more

ſtrikingly deſcribed, and they have all the recommendation of being exact copies of nature. He exhibits much variety of them in all his comedies, and he diſplays them ſufficiently by the different circumſtances in which he places them. But when we have ſaid ſo much, we have exhauſted all the praiſe we can beſtow upon Congreve. The licentiouſneſs and indecency of his performances deſerve no quarter. The moſt dubious and luſcious alluſions, the moſt equivocal ſentiments and conduct, the moſt relaxed principles, relative to the intercourſe between the ſexes, debaſe his productions, and inſenſibly corrupt the feelings and the heart. His plots, beſides, are ſometimes embarraſſed with incidents, and overloaded with characters. The buſineſs is not conducted with regularity and ſimplicity. Several of the ſcenes are ſuperfluous, and many of the ſpeeches might be ſhortened with advantage.

The comedies of Vanburgh, Cibber, and Farquhar, particularly the Journey to London, the Suſpicious Huſband, and the Trip to the Jubilee, poſſeſs high merit, and are not expoſed to the cenſure of licentiouſneſs. They diſplay, indeed, leſs wit than thoſe of Congreve, but they exhibit finiſhed ſpecimens of genteel comedy, much vivacity and humour, and great variety of character exquiſitely marked. The buſineſs is conducted with re-

gularity, and every regard to decency and propriety is preserved. A more pleasant entertainment can scarcely be enjoyed, than one of these comedies well represented.

Were not the Suspicious Husband exceptionable in the character of Ranger, I should not scruple to hold it forth as one of the most complete comedies any age has produced. I know no work of the kind where there is so much refined comic merit. The characters are admirably varied and contrasted; wit, humour, vivacity, distinguish every scene. The attention is constantly supported by a succession of the most vivid incidents and repartees. The feelings and operations of the mind are admirably displayed, in some of the most gay and interesting situations which highly civilized life can exhibit; and the propriety and decency of every character and sentiment are perfectly irreproachable, except those of the one I have noticed. But Ranger is not a little censurable, not because he is not well drawn, or is not delineated from real life; in both these views he merits much praise; but because he is a dangerous character to decency and virtue; because he possesses amiable qualities which procure him the favour of the audience, while he discovers sentiments and conduct they ought not to approve.

The comedies of Sir Richard Steele inherit every species of merit in respect of decency and deco-

rum; but I am ſorry to remark, that they can claim little other recommendation. They have little vivacity, leſs wit, and no humour; they are dull, formal, declamatory compoſitions, deficient in character, genius, and ſpirit.

Of the poſterior productions of the comic muſe which I have peruſed, the Weſt Indian ſeems to be entitled to the firſt praiſe. I muſt, however, give notice, that I have not read the comedies of Colman and Goldſmith. Of the ſtill later productions of the ſame muſe, it would be improper yet to ſpeak.

The Weſt Indian poſſeſſes much characteriſtic merit, and affords a very agreeable entertainment both in the repreſentation and in the peruſal. The characters are numerous, and delineated with much ſpirit. Several of them, particularly O'Flaherty and Lady Ruſport, are highly comic. The family of the Dudleys preſents a little group of the moſt virtuous, honourable, and amiable people, ſtruggling with adverſity, and bearing it with the patience of patriots and heroes. Miſs Ruſport is an excellent female character, frank, generous, kind, and ſenſible, but guided by the ſtricteſt principles of decorum. The Weſt Indian poſſeſſes all the qualities of his climate which recommend him to the heart, while they oblige us frequently to reprehend the giddineſs of his head. The ſcenes of ſentiment

which are thrown into the piece, do not diminiſh its merit in my judgement, however incongruous they may be ſuppoſed to be to the light and pleaſant ſtrain of comedy. They are a contraſt to the comic parts of the performance, and add to them dignity and intereſt.

Opera, as it is conducted in England, forms a ſpecies of muſical comedy. As it appears in the hands of Metaſtaſio, the great Italian poet of the preſent age, it aſſumes rather the ſemblance of tragedy. The capital Engliſh operas, the Maid of the Mill, Love in a Village, and the Beggar's Opera, furniſh exceedingly pleaſant entertainments. All the characters and incidents are comic; the ſongs are the only circumſtance in which they differ from comedy. The ſongs do not commonly make any part of the buſineſs, nor are they altogether detached from it. They are generally employed to exhibit ſome ſentiments or deſcriptions of the characters ſuggeſted immediately by the incidents of the piece.

It is farther to be remarked, that the muſic is all of the ſimple and ſentimental kind, which is addreſſed to the heart rather than the ear, and which, conſequently, is reliſhed by all mankind. Muſic compounded of many parts, like that of Italy, may pleaſe the adept in the art, but will ſcarcely recommend itſelf to any ear which has not undergone the diſcipline of a muſical education.

The operas of Metaſtaſio have much merit as dramatic compoſitions; many of them are grave and pathetic. I cannot paſs any judgement on their muſical merit, as I never was ſo fortunate as to hear any of them repreſented. I can, however, conceive the entertainment to be exceedingly agreeable. Metaſtaſio poſſeſſes much genius; his characters are well drawn and ſupported. The buſineſs of his operas is regular and intereſting, and his verſification appears to be muſic itſelf. He never degenerates into that quaintneſs and conceit which disfigure the poetry of many of his countrymen. Nor have we reaſon to complain of that vacuity of thought, and warbling of inſignificant words, with which many Italian operas have been juſtly ſtigmatiſed. In a word, the elegant language of Italy, repleniſhed with the ſentiments, and adorned with the imagination of Metaſtaſio, exhibits dramatic productions of ſuch merit as muſt pleaſe every reader.

However difficult it may be to determine the ſuperiority of the ancient or modern drama in point of merit, we will hardly heſitate to prefer the modern in point of repreſentation. It has been ſuppoſed, that the ancients were ſo ſqueamiſh about the articulation of their tragedies, as to regulate it by notes of muſic; but it is difficult to conceive the reaſon of ſo much nicety in this article, when we conſider other circumſtances which muſt have attended their theatrical exhibitions.

An ancient theatre was a great ſemicircular or ſemioval building uncovered, for all the ancient repreſentations paſſed in day-light. The ſtage ſtood on the diameter of the building; and benches run round the circular part, riſing above one another often to a very great height. The ſcenes were placed behind the ſtage, and were of two conſtructions. Sometimes they were fixed on a large triangular frame, which turned on a pivot. The ſcene correſponding to the dialogue was preſented to the audience, and in the mean time other ſcenes were placed in the other ſides of the frame, as the repreſentation might require. Sometimes the ſcenes were ſhoved aſide, or were carried away in a manner ſimilar to the practice of many modern theatres. Both thoſe kinds of ſcenes ſeem to be noticed by Virgil in the following lines:

> "Vel ſcæna ut verſis diſcedat frontibus, utque
> Purpurea intexti tollant aulæa Britanni."

An ancient theatre was ſo large, that no human voice could reach all the audience, which frequently conſiſted of many thouſands of ſpectators. To ſtrengthen the articulation of the actor, ſome kind of pipe is ſuppoſed to have been added to the mouth of the maſk with which his face was covered. On the maſk was painted a figure reſembling the countenance of the character repreſented. The actor was

clothed in long flowing robes, and his ftature was increafed by the help of fhoes with high heels, called *cothurni.* It is farther to be obferved, that the ancients had no female performers, fo that all the female parts of their plays muft have been reprefented by boys or men. Thefe circumftances feem to make it evident, that the reprefentations of antiquity muft have been deftitute of the greater part of thofe graces and merits which deferve the jufteft praife, and which fo much contribute, in modern times, to render the theatre an amufement fo captivating. An ancient actor appears to have been a mere pageant, more calculated to amufe children, than to exprefs the feelings and paffions of the hearts of men. What an infuperable impediment to all juft action muft have been the total abfence of the expreffion of the countenance, and the fubftitution of a dead daubed portrait of canvas? What modulation or beauty could there be in the voice of an actor, who was obliged to pronounce with a high exertion of his organs in order to be heard, and who conveyed his tones through fome inftrument like a fpeaking trumpet? Is it not prepofterous to fuppofe, that an audience would be fo fqueamifh about the pronunciation of a play, as to require it to be regulated by notes, who could patiently hear the female parts pronounced by men or even by boys, fpeaking through a pipe?

An ancient actor could not eafily poffefs other merit, than that of ftalking about with grace, and of expreffing diftinctly and audibly the lines he had to rehearfe. The elegant geftures and natural motions of modern performers, the expreffion of the face, which conftitutes a capital article in all verbal communications, and the handfome and convenient accommodations of a modern theatre, were unknown. It will perhaps be objected, that exhibitions fo rude could not engage attention, and that people fo polifhed as the Greeks and Romans could not have been pleafed with reprefentations of fo little merit. In anfwer to this, it may be obferved, that tafte in the arts in a great meafure depends on experience. The excellence of the artift improves the difcernment of the public, and his eminence is prompted by ambition or emulation. If he be void of thofe qualities, he will make no improvements, and the tafte of the public will remain ftationary. Attachment to the exhibitions of any art is not always ftrongeft when thefe are in their moft perfect ftate, becaufe in this ftate many circumftances concur to reprefs attachment. Individuals are eafily difgufted, becaufe their tafte is nice and refined. Controverfies about merit enfue, and thefe diminifh or divide attachment. But when all are pleafed becaufe they have difcovered few defects; when every body is gratified with the higheft merit of which he has any conception, then is the time for

general applaufe. The Greeks and Romans, accordingly, might be highly fatisfied with their own reprefentations, becaufe they had no experience of better, and becaufe they imagined, perhaps, no better could exift. They might exprefs this approbation in terms fo ftrong, as to raife our ideas of it beyond the truth; in the fame manner as the high applaufe beftowed on the players of the end of the feventeenth century, might lead us erroneoufly to think them fuperior performers to thofe of the prefent time.

LOGIC.

INTRODUCTION.

SOME people imagine that Logic is a frivolous, an oftentatious, at beft an unneceffary art, which may ferve to puzzle and perplex, but can be of little utility in bufinefs or philofophy. Others are perhaps of opinion, though it were more ufeful than it is, yet it requires a ftudy fo dry and uninterefting, fo abftract and difficult, that few inquirers have patience to make any progrefs in it, or to convert it to any advantage.

Were the fyftem I have to lay before you compofed of the idle fyllogifm of the fchools, which till lately was the only fyftem taught in our colleges, I fhould not have confidence to maintain, that there was not a great deal of foundation for the firft objection. In the fhort account of that fyftem which I have to advance, I believe it will

appear, that it is a vain and unavailing inſtrument of truth and knowledge.

But, though the ſyllogiſm of the ſchools, and the old art of logic, be admitted to be idle ſyſtems, yet we will ſurely have more candour than to infer, that there is no art at all in reaſoning; that there is no ſuch thing as good reaſoning; or that it is of little uſe to be a good reaſoner. I, on the contrary, will take for granted, that there is no accompliſhment or qualification any man can acquire more important. Whether, then, you become in life men of ſpeculation, or men of buſineſs, in every ſtep you take, your rational faculty muſt be conſtantly exerted; and the following lectures are calculated entirely to render you expert and ſucceſsful in that exerciſe.

As to the ſecond objection, that the ſtudy is uninteresting, dry, and difficult, the proper anſwer is, that it is no more ſo than every exerciſe of the underſtanding naturally is, and muſt be. There is nothing in it either ſo unintereſting, ſo dry, or ſo difficult, which any perſon poſſeſſed of ordinary capacity may not eaſily ſurmount, and which every perſon muſt ſurmount, who expects to acquire, either in philoſophy, literature, or buſineſs, as much uſe of his underſtanding, as to attend to any train of thought. It is by the proper uſe of his underſtanding, that man attains his eminent characteriſtic of being rational. It is by the pro-

per uſe of his underſtanding, that he can make any progreſs in knowledge. It is by the ſame means only, that he can obtain the flattering diſtinctions claimed by ſuperior judgement, and by which he can avoid the diſgrace attached to ignorance and ſtupidity. In a word, to all orders of men, true logic pretends to lend the moſt ſalutary aid. Her pretenſions are at leaſt commendable, and her efforts are entitled to the moſt patient reflection and candid examination.

LECTURE I.

OBJECT OF LOGIC—OPERATIONS OF THE MIND—IDEAS—SIMPLE AND COMPLEX—DISTINCT AND OBSCURE.

THE object of education is to increaſe knowledge, to refine imagination, to improve taſte, and to prepare us for acting a part in life, reſpectable and uſeful in itſelf, as well as advantageous and honourable to the public. In the ſtudy of language, the faculty chiefly employed and exercifed is memory. In proceeding towards the cultivation of taſte and genius, and the acquiſition of ſcience, the faculties moſt ſuſceptible of improvement are the imagination and the underſtanding. Polite literature is addreſſed to the imagination and the underſtanding in conjunction; ſcience is addreſſed to the underſtanding alone. In riſing, then,

from the exercise of memory in the study of language, towards the investigations of the understanding in the regions of science, the most proper gradation seems to be what we have followed, namely, that the mind should be some time occupied in those agreeable prospects exhibited to the imagination, and in those entertaining speculations addressed to the understanding, with which the arts of speaking and writing abound. The most successful initiation into the researches of philosophy, is perhaps disquisitions about objects with which we are familiar, and inquiries into the operations of the human mind, which we every day experience.

But, though many of our pleasures, and much of our utility in life, result from the extent of our memory, and the correctness of our taste, yet the cultivation of the understanding is the great object of all mental improvements. It is the faculty by which we are most distinguished above the creatures of this world, and by which, perhaps, we partake most of the constitution of superior natures. It is the faculty by which we improve all our other powers, and discover what we ought to applaud or condemn in the objects and means of their gratification. By it we conduct ourselves with discretion and innocence in active scenes. By it we render retirement reputable and comfortable. By it, in a word, we acquire all our wisdom and knowledge,

we attain fame, improve ſociety, and add the moſt deciſive dignity to human life.

Of all arts, then, that ſurely is entitled to attention which pretends to tell us how we may improve and properly employ this moſt uſeful faculty; and logic is that art. The profeſſed purpoſe of it is to teach the right uſe of reaſon, both in the inveſtigation and in the communication of truth; to inform us how to introduce clearneſs and good order among our ideas, to explain the operations of the mind, which are converſant about them; and by the proper exerciſe of which operations, we ſhall be leaſt in danger of deviating into error.

The underſtanding is occupied entirely about knowledge. The end of all ſcience is to inſtruct us in knowledge; and the ſame end is purſued by all ſtudy, whether prudential, political, moral, or mechanical. In whatever way we exert our underſtanding, it is to obtain ſome information we did not before know; and the deſign of the art of logic is to hold forth the manner of attaining that knowledge with moſt eaſe and expedition.

From theſe views of the nature and end of logic, it is apparent, that it is one of the firſt arts to which we ſhould apply our attention in our progreſs towards knowledge, as affording the beſt means of fortifying and improving our underſtanding. The more acute the underſtanding is, it will

be more ſucceſsful in the inveſtigations of ſcience. The leſs it is liable to err, the more certain and expeditious will be its progreſs. The more we are acquainted with thoſe prejudices and partialities which have miſled other reaſoners, we ſhall be in leſs danger of miſtake. The better we underſtand the nature of the inſtrument we employ, we may reaſonably expect to be more expert and ſucceſsful in the uſe of it. Every thing, then, in logic, that does not contribute to improve the underſtanding, and to promote our progreſs in uſeful knowledge, I ſhall not heſitate to pronounce unworthy of attention; but every thing, on the other hand, that promotes theſe ends, cannot obtain more attention than it deſerves.

I am well aware, that no art ever gave occaſion to ſo much idle reſearch, and fanciful refinement, as that of which I now ſpeak. No art has ſo much bewildered and repreſſed every uſeful exertion of the underſtanding, as that which pretended to enlighten and improve this faculty, and to guide it in the road to truth. All the efforts of human genius, all the learning which for many centuries prevailed in Europe, were ſubtle diſquiſitions, and puzzling diſtinctions, about the method of inveſtigating knowledge, without applying that method to any important inquiry. All the ſyllogiſm of the ſchools, after the thouſands of volumes that have been written upon it, and after the employment of a ſe-

ries of ages to bring it to perfection, never enriched ſcience or buſineſs with one uſeful diſcovery.

Let us not, however, raſhly conclude, that theſe abuſes furniſh a proof of the general inutility or inſignificance of the art to which I now call your attention. It is curious even to ſurvey the ingenuity with which ſo many men have gone wrong, with the endleſs perplexities in which they have involved themſelves. To point out theſe is one of the purpoſes of this work; but it is of more ſubſtantial utility to learn the nature of truth, and the operations of the human mind, which are concerned in the diſcovery and extenſion of knowledge.

As the ſophiſtry, then, and abſurdity, with which logic has been diſgraced, are no valid objections againſt the uſe of it, ſo neither is the argument, that many men reaſon often very juſtly without any acquaintance with its rules. There is in all mankind ſome natural logic, for it is one of thoſe arts which may be learned by practice, without the knowledge of theory. One of the beſt methods of making progreſs in the art of reaſoning, is actual practice, or the acquiſition of the habit of examining a train of ideas that conſtitute an argument; and of this branch of the art all men acquire ſome ſhare by experience; many men acquire a great deal. But,

though long experience in found reafoning may render us expert logicians, in the fame manner as practice, without the knowledge of principles, may form eminent practitioners in any other art; yet this fuccefs will not juftify any inference againft the utility, or even the propriety of theory. The end of all theory in the arts is to render us more methodical and reputable performers, and it can fcarcely fail to produce this effect, when properly applied.

What is the theory of an art? It is a philofophical delineation of the principles on which the art is founded, of the end it has in view, and of the means by which it propofes to accomplifh that end. From this delineation are deduced the rules of the beft practice, which are commonly illuftrated from the experience of the moft fuccefsful practitioners. A theory of an art, then, is a collection of all the knowledge which can be obtained concerning that art, from the combined information of all preceding theorifts and practitioners. It points out the moft patent and direct road to fuccefs, and it marks all the corners and obftructions, at which improper deviations are moft likely to be committed; fo that, after having learned the theory, nothing remains but to obtain the habit of ready and accurate practice, in order to render us able and fuccefsful performers.

Although, then, many men are good reafoners

who never learned logic, yet the knowledge of that art may be neither ſuperfluous nor nugatory; becauſe an acquaintance with it may either facilitate our progreſs in becoming good reaſoners, or may enable us to reach greater eminence in that line, than thoſe who have not enjoyed the advantages we poſſeſs; and if we acquire by it either of theſe emoluments, it is of too much importance not to attract our ſerious attention.

As the object of logic is to teach the beſt uſe of our rational faculty, both in inveſtigating and in communicating truth, the theory of it, and the materials of which that theory conſiſts, are deduced from this end. That theory, accordingly, conſiſts of two parts; the nature of ideas, which are the materials on which we reaſon, and the nature of the faculties or operations of the mind which are concerned in reaſoning. Before we can reaſon, we muſt have ideas, and before we can reaſon right, we muſt underſtand what kind of operation reaſoning is. The explication of both comprehends the whole of logic which is of any uſe.

In explaining the nature of ideas, and of the operations employed about them, one of two methods muſt be adopted. We muſt either treat them ſeparately, or in conjunction. We muſt either firſt diſcuſs the ideas, and then the operations, or we muſt carry on the account of both at the

ſame time. The latter is the better method, becauſe one of the chief means of explaining the nature of ideas is, to point out the operations of which they are the objects; and one of the chief means of illuſtrating the operations is, to preſent the ſingle ideas, or the cluſters of ideas, about which the operations are exerted. This latter method we cannot heſitate to follow; and, in adopting it, all we have to do is, to ſpecify and illuſtrate the operations from experience, and then to explain the ſingle ideas, or the collections of ideas, about which each operation is converſant.

The operations employed in the inveſtigation of truth are commonly reckoned three, perception, judgement, and reaſoning. By perception is underſtood that operation by which the mind ſees and becomes acquainted with every ſingle idea it poſſeſſes. By judgement is underſtood that operation by which the mind diſcovers the agreement or the diſagreement of any two ideas it may have occaſion to compare, in order to diſcover truth and knowledge. By reaſoning is underſtood that operation in which the mind compares two ideas by means of one or more intermediate ideas, in order to diſcover the amount of what is commonly called a demonſtration or an argument. This ſhort account of theſe operations muſt at preſent ſuffice; for, as they comprehend the whole theory of logic, I

am afterwards to resume and re-consider them separately.

That the logician may proceed with greater perspicuity, he begins with examining ideas as existing separately, or detached from one another. Ideas are the impressions made on the mind either by external objects, through the medium of the bodily senses, or by the consciousness it has of its own internal feelings and operations. When an external object presents itself to any of the five senses, sight, hearing, taste, touch, smell, some picture, or notion, or conception of it, is formed in the mind; this picture, or notion, or conception, is totally different from the object, and is called the idea of it; the object is called the archetype of the idea. By sight we receive the greatest number, and the most lively of all our ideas, namely, those of all the visible objects in nature, animated and inanimated, with which we are or can be acquainted. By hearing we get ideas of natural and artificial sounds, particularly of the sounds of language, and the important information they convey. The ideas of the other three senses, taste, smell, touch, are not nearly so numerous, and they relate mostly to the preservation, or the comfortable subsistence, of the individual. By taste and smell we are directed to those aliments which are necessary and salutary, and are diverted from those which are hurtful or destructive. By the touch we examine the surfaces

of bodies, and receive all thofe ideas that operation is qualified to fuggeft. All the ideas we acquire through the medium of the external fenfes, are faid to be derived from fenfation. The only other fource of ideas is our own confcioufnefs of the feelings and operations which pafs within our own minds, and is called reflection. Moft philofophers feem now agreed, that we poffefs no other fources of ideas but thefe two; though many ideas may be derived partly from both.

You will underftand what is meant by reflection, as a fource of ideas, by the following obfervations. Every feeling or operation of the mind prompts an idea of that feeling or operation; for example, the ideas fuggefted by the feelings of fear, joy, hope, or by the operations of perceiving, arranging, comparing, feparating, and compounding our ideas, communicate as diftinct and palpable impreffions, as any we receive through the medium of the external fenfes. But, as thefe feelings and operations are all attended with confcioufnefs or confideration paffing within the mind, they are therefore called ideas of reflection.

After the mind has been replenifhed with ideas in the manner now explained, it begins to prepare them for the purpofes of logic, or the difcovery of truth and knowledge. It arranges them into claffes, and affigns them different names, according

as they are ſimple or complex, diſtinct or confuſed, adequate or inadequate, particular or abſtract.

A ſimple idea, as its name inſinuates, can be contemplated only in one view. It cannot be divided or taken to pieces, becauſe it does not conſiſt of parts, being naturally indiviſible. Moſt of our ideas of the qualities of bodies are of this claſs, as hard, ſoft, round, ſmooth, white, black, cold, hot; all ideas, perhaps, of taſtes, ſmells, ſounds, as bitter, ſweet, low, loud, and many of our ideas of the feelings and operations of the mind, as of deſire, averſion, hunger, pain, thinking, willing, diſcerning, reaſoning. We cannot divide them, even in imagination; they are perfectly uniform, and void of parts.

A complex idea contains two or more ſimple or ſubordinate ideas, into which it may be divided, and which ſubordinate ideas, when divided, may be conſidered ſeparately. All our ideas of ſubſtances are complex, as of animals, vegetables, and the inanimate parts of nature. The idea of a tree, for inſtance, includes a great variety of ſubordinate ideas, thoſe of wood, ſtock, roots, branches, vegetable life, ſhape, leaves, bark, bloſſoms, fruit; ſeveral of which ſubordinate ideas may be ſubdivided into other ideas. All ideas of figures, as of circles, ſquares, triangles, cubes, cylinders, pyramids; moſt of the ideas of virtues and vices, as

of juftice, fortitude, veracity, theft, ingratitude, falfehood, deceit.

The fecond divifion of ideas was, into diftinct and confufed, or, which is much the fame thing, into clear and obfcure. Diftinct or clear ideas are thofe of which we have full and perfect comprehenfion, and which we can readily feparate or diftinguifh from all other ideas. Confufed or obfcure ideas are thofe of which we have not full and perfect comprehenfion, and which we cannot eafily feparate or diftinguifh from all other ideas. Diftinct and clear ideas are perceived with a perfpicuity and energy, fimilar to that by which the mind contemplates figures in mathematics, or numbers in arithmetic; all their boundaries and their differences are completely difcernible. Confufed or obfcure ideas are like the colours of a rainbow, they run into one another, and the mind neither perceives fully their nature nor their limits.

The acquifition of clear and diftinct ideas is of the utmoft confequence in the inveftigation of knowledge; for the degree of conviction with which it is prefented to the mind, is always in proportion to the degree of clearnefs and diftinctnefs which we have introduced among our ideas. Were all our ideas clear, all our knowledge would be demonftrative, a quality which belongs only to our fcientific knowledge. Obfcurity, more or lefs, adheres to all our other ideas, and leaves us only greater or

less degrees of probable evidence, corresponding to the less or greater obscurity of our ideas. In the mathematical sciences, and in arithmetic, the evidence is demonstrative, because our ideas of all the figures and numbers about which we reason are perfectly clear and distinct, and because, in comparing them, we perceive accurately whether they agree or disagree; and if they disagree, how great the excess of one is above another, so that we can affirm, either that they are equal, or that the one exceeds the other by a certain quantity. In morals, in politics, in arts, and in business, almost all our ideas are more or less obscure; hence, in comparing them, we cannot precisely pronounce whether they agree or disagree; and though we were sure that they disagree, yet we cannot accurately ascertain the difference. The necessary consequence is, that in all these branches of knowledge, we can obtain no demonstrative evidence for truth. We must be satisfied with probable evidence, and we should be attentive to procure ideas as clear and distinct as possible, that we may reach the highest degree of probability.

I shall not at present pursue farther the doctrine of distinct and obscure ideas; a future opportunity will occur of discussing more completely this important subject. I shall then have occasion to point out the caution with which we should proceed in the examination of our ideas, the prejudices by

which they are obſcured, but particularly the attention we muſt employ to prevent the confuſion which may be introduced among them by the improper uſe of words. From theſe views, the important and extenſive utility of logic will appear, and how deeply its rules and principles enter into all our inquiries and knowledge.

LECTURE II.

IDEAS—ADEQUATE AND INADEQUATE—PARTICULAR AND ABSTRACT.—RULES CONCERNING IDEAS.

THE third divifion of ideas related to their being adequate or inadequate. An adequate idea is a perfect picture of its archetype, or contains a reprefentation of all the parts of which the archetype confifts. It is different from a diftinct idea, becaufe an idea may be diftinct and not adequate; that is, we may have a clear perception of all the parts of an idea, as far as thefe parts extend, though thefe parts may not conftitute a complete collection of thofe of the archetype. We may have, for example, a diftinct idea of a triangle, and yet not poffefs an adequate idea of a right angled triangle, an ifofceles, or fcalenum; which, befides the general ideas of three fides and three angles, require that the fides and angles fhould be

of a particular ſpecies. An inadequate idea is not a perfect picture of its archetype, or contains not a complete repreſentation of the parts of which the archetype conſiſts.

Almoſt all ſimple ideas are adequate, as thoſe of colours, taſtes, or qualities; all ideas of mathematical figures, and of numbers, as triangles, ſquares, cubes, cylinders, fifty, a hundred, a thouſand, ten thouſand. But although, when we examine archetypes with attention, ideas will be as adequate as we can make them; and when knowledge is either demonſtrative, or even highly probable, ideas muſt really, or very nearly, be adequate; yet if we compare ideas, not only with what we know of their archetypes, but with what may be known of them, and perhaps is known of them by ſuperior beings, few of our ideas, except thoſe of mathematics and arithmetic, will be found to be adequate.

There is hardly any other thing in nature, of which our knowledge is complete. We are acquainted with a few only of the properties of animals, vegetables, and inanimate matter; what ſubſtance is, whether of matter or ſpirit, is totally beyond our comprehenſion. The whole ſyſtem of the tranſmutation, or the aſſimilation of nature, by which the nutriment of animals is converted into the different parts of which their bodies conſiſt, bones, fleſh, ſinews, blood, hair, horn, &c. and by which inanimate nature is converted into the nu-

merous parts of vegetables and metals, feemingly fo different from one another, as trees, fhrubs, leaves, bark, bloffoms, fruit, gold, filver, mercury, &c. is to us altogether unintelligible.

In all thefe cafes, and in many others which might be mentioned, our ideas are unavoidably inadequate. But, fortunate would it be if our ideas were always adequate, or as near to adequate as poffible, when it is in our power, by induftry and attention, to make them fo. They are lefs adequate than they might be, chiefly from two caufes; firft, careleffnefs in the examination of archetypes, which overlooks fome of their properties or parts; and, fecondly, inattention in afcertaining the meaning of the words employed to denote them, which words often do not exprefs the fame parts, or all the parts, in our minds, which they do in the minds of others. In both cafes, our knowledge cannot be fo complete as that of a perfon who has taken care to prevent thefe errors or defects; and in every difcourfe or controverfy with that perfon, we muft mifunderftand him when thefe words occur.

The laft diftinction of ideas confiders them as particular or abftract. This is the moft important diftinction, as it enters deep into the conftitution both of language and knowledge. All things exift in nature as individuals or particulars. Every fubftance is that

of fome particular animal, vegetable, or inanimate piece of matter. Every material quality, as hard, fmooth, rough, black, white, belongs to fome fubftance or body, without which the quality cannot fubfift. Every virtue or vice has always relation to fome agent; and, though we may fpeak, fpeculate, or reafon, concerning them, feparated from this agent, yet we muft admit, that, independent of him, they have no actual exiftence, nor any exiftence except in idea.

Particular ideas reprefent individuals as they exift in nature, as a houfe, a horfe, a man, a tree, for which, perhaps, we have no names, or to which we give the names of St James's, Bucephalus, Alexander, or the Royal Oak. Ideas, however, would be in number infinite, and communication, of courfe, would be impracticable, if every individual thing with which we are acquainted were to require an idea and a name to denote it. To furmount this obftacle, the mind is very fortunately endowed with the faculty called abftraction, by which it arranges all the individuals which have any common qualities, or which have any thing fimilar, either in their figure, exiftence, or action, into claffes. It affigns a general idea and name to each clafs, and takes the trouble, only when compelled fo to do, to fpecify individuals, to diftinguifh them in the mind by ideas, and in language by names. Ideas and language, by this expedient,

are rendered exceedingly manageable and convenient; for the individuals of which it is neceffary to form ideas, and fabricate names, are not very numerous, fcarcely more than thofe of the human race. It was much more neceffary to affign ideas and names to the individuals of this clafs, than to affign ideas and names to all the individuals of all the claffes in nature; while the former expedient is equally convenient for the purpofes of communication.

This power of forming an idea of a clafs of objects, is called abftraction, for the following reafon: The idea of a clafs contains only thofe parts or qualities which are common to all the individuals of the clafs; while the qualities peculiar to any individual are left out, or abftracted from thofe which conftitute the general idea of the clafs. The general or abftract idea, for example, of the clafs of vegetables called trees, contains the following parts, a plant of confiderable height, which fets out large branches, is clothed with bark, and in fummer bears leaves and feeds. All the plants that can be called trees have thefe qualities; and in forming an idea of thefe qualities, the mind abftracts its attention from all the qualities which are peculiar to any particular tree, fuch as, the fize and direction of the branches, the nature of the wood, the colour, furface, and fhape of the bark, and of the leaves,

and the nature and properties of the feeds, fuch as berries, acorns, apples, pears, &c. Again, the general idea of a horfe contains the ideas of a large and beautiful quadruped, of cylindrical body, high-fet neck, taper limbs, fwift, ftrong, ufeful, docile; but it includes not the ideas of fhape, colour, fize, pleafure, or utility, which diftinguifh individuals, the race-horfe, the hunter, the war-horfe, or the horfe of the plough.

The mind is not fatisfied with forming one ftage of claffes, which may comprehend individuals. It generalizes much farther, with the fame view of fimplifying and facilitating the means of communication and knowledge, and of abridging the number of ideas and words. It conftitutes claffes above claffes. Accordingly, it forms a fecond clafs, containing the properties which one firft clafs has in common with other firft claffes, fo that the firft clafs is now confidered as making only one of the conftituent parts of the fecond clafs. The clafs of creatures called men, for example, comprehends what qualities are common to all its individuals, Romulus, Alexander, Julius Cæfar. But the clafs of men has many common qualities with other claffes of living creatures, horfes, dogs, fheep, fifhes, fowls, &c. namely, life, motion, fhape, colour; and hence, of thefe common properties is framed a higher clafs, called that of animals,

which contains the qualities common to all living creatures.

The mind ſometimes aſcends higher, and forms another claſs more general, of all the properties which this ſecond claſs has in common with other claſſes in nature. For example, animals have ſeveral properties in common with vegetables, as ſhape, colour, growth, decay, circulation of juices; of theſe is formed a third claſs, called animated nature. We may proceed farther ſtill to form a fourth claſs, which will contain all things, animate and inanimate. The properties, however, of it are very few, and ſcarcely amount to more than exiſtence and figure.

Though all theſe ſteps of generalizing are ſometimes neceſſary or uſeful, yet knowledge and language ſeldom require attention to more than three of them; namely, the individual, the firſt claſs, and the ſecond. The firſt claſs is called the ſpecies, the ſecond the genus. Thus, Alexander is the individual, man is the ſpecies, and animal is the genus; the royal oak is the individual, tree is the ſpecies, and vegetable is the genus; St James's is the individual, dwelling-houſe is the ſpecies, edifice is the genus. The third and fourth claſſes are alſo denominated genera. The ſecond claſs, or the one immediately above the ſpecies, is called the proximate genus, the third and fourth claſſes are

called tranſcendant genera. The proximate genus of the ſpecies man is animal; exiſtence is the tranſcendant genus. The proximate genus of tree is vegetable; the tranſcendant may be animated nature, or exiſtence.

It is to be obſerved, though general or abſtract ideas are more comprehenſive, or extend to more objects, than particular ideas, yet that they are leſs complex, or contain fewer parts, and that the more general they are, they are leſs complex, or contain fewer parts in proportion. The reaſon is exceedingly obvious. A genus contains only the few properties which are common to the ſeveral ſpecies which it includes, and which are not nearly ſo numerous as thoſe that belong to each ſpecies. The ſpecies, again, contains the properties which are common to all the individuals it includes, and which are not ſo numerous as thoſe that pertain to each individual. The genus animal, for inſtance, includes few properties, life, ſhape, colour, motion, growth, decay. The ſpecies man contains all theſe properties of the genus, beſides thoſe of the ſpecies, namely, power of ſpeech, thinking, acting with deſign, and many others. The individual contains all theſe qualities I have enumerated, both of the genus and of the ſpecies, together with thoſe peculiar to the individual, wiſe or prudent, knowing or ignorant, rich, poor, fortunate, unfortunate, all theſe qualities, however variable, and in

a particular degree correſponding to the nature or character of the individual.

The power of abſtraction is one of the moſt important belonging to the underſtanding, and the practice of it in ſcience and in buſineſs is of the moſt extenſive uſe. It will afterwards be explained, that all definitions are regulated by the arrangements of abſtraction, and that they conſiſt entirely in referring an individual to its ſpecies, with the addition of ſome quality which diſtinguiſhes it from the other individuals of its ſpecies; or in referring a ſpecies to its genus, with the addition of ſome quality which characteriſes it as a ſpecies.

To evince the exceedingly extenſive utility of abſtraction, I muſt obſerve, that all ſcience, almoſt all reaſoning, indeed almoſt all the words of language, are converſant about abſtract ideas. You will readily apprehend, that the two ſciences of quantity, mathematics and arithmetic, are occupied entirely about abſtract ideas. No property is demonſtrated of any triangle in the elements of geometry, that is not true of all triangles, at leaſt all triangles of the ſame kind. The figure delineated on the board of the mathematician is not particular and local; it repreſents every figure of the ſame ſpecies, and the demonſtration is equally extenſive in its application, namely, to all figures of the ſpe-

cies. Were not this the cafe, fcience would have no exiftence, and the mind of man could make no progrefs in knowledge. Were not this the cafe, the mathematician would be obliged to demonftrate the properties of every particular figure he fhould employ, and all progrefs in knowledge would be fufpended, becaufe the new figures of the fame fpecies which may occur are infinite.

All the operations in numbers or arithmetic, the objects of which is difcreted quantity, or quantity divided into parts, are of a general nature, and all the truths they eftablifh are of the fame denomination. The capital operations of addition and fubtraction, into which all others in arithmetic are refolveable, however apparently removed from them, refpect not the comparifon of any two individual parts of divifible quantity; the conjunction of both in one total, which is the object of addition, or the disjunction of the quantity by which the greater exceeds the leffer, which is the object of fubtraction. They are of a general nature, and are applicable to all cafes whatever, in which quantity is divifible and feparable.

In like manner, inquiries in morals, concerning virtues and vices; in politics, concerning legiflation, and the happinefs of communities; in arts, concerning beauty and utility; in bufinefs, concerning propriety, decency, wifdom, and intereft; are all of an abftract nature, and are theories eftablifhed by

argumentation and experience, which every individual applies to his particular caſe, according to his beſt judgement.

We muſt not, however, conclude, that no reaſoning is competent about particular ideas or individuals. The agreement or diſagreement of ideas, in which knowledge conſiſts, is equally perceptible in particular ideas as in general ones; and we can reaſon as well about one man, one tree, or one triangle, as about the ſpecies, or genus, of theſe individuals. But all particular reaſonings are confined to the caſes to which they are applied; and, of courſe, as they are of very limited uſe, we avoid them as much as poſſible, and rather ſeek for general theories, in which particular caſes may be included. In a word, all the appellative nouns of language are ſignificant only of abſtract ideas, ſo that there is hardly a topic about which we can either ſpeak or write, that is not the offspring of abſtraction.

As abſtraction is the capital operation by which ideas are prepared for reaſoning, and by which reaſonings become of extenſive uſe, ſo it is the operation by which man is moſt eminently diſtinguiſhed above the inferior animals. We cannot doubt that the inferior animals poſſeſs particular ideas, and that they even deduce inferences from them; that they are endowed with a power of recalling them, and of forming aſſociations among them. The horſe re-

collects, and discovers a manifest inclination to revisit the house where he has formerly been well used; but he forms the same opinion of no other house, where his opinion has not been supported by experience, that is, he draws no general conclusion concerning the probability of similar good usage in similar houses. The pointer that has frequently been beaten for starting heath-game or partridge before the fowler was ready to take aim, learns in time to connect correction with such rashness, and consequently forbears the latter from fear of the former; but his associations extend not beyond his experience, and his primitive rashness remains with regard to a hare or a snipe.

I have now explained the nature of ideas, and the divisions of them which appeared to be of consequence sufficient to attract attention; but, as I intend this course to be an introduction, not to the idle syllogism of the schools, but to sound reasoning in the sciences, in arts, and in business, and as ideas are the materials of all reasoning, before I relinquish this subject, I shall point out the most frequent causes of their imperfections, and endeavour to suggest the best means of preventing or removing these imperfections. I shall not, however, treat of these topics separately, because they are necessarily conjoined. When we know the causes of errors, the road to truth is to avoid them. When the imperfections of ideas are removed,

they become clear and diſtinct of courſe. I ſhall therefore comprehend both theſe views of ideas in the following rules concerning the acquiſition and examination of them.

1. Repleniſh the mind with as great variety of important ideas as poſſible.

The end of all ſcience, of reading, of obſervation, of the ſtudy of nature and arts, of uſeful converſation, and of education, is to repleniſh the mind with ideas, in order to extend our knowledge, and to improve our faculties, to render us happy in ourſelves, ſerviceable to ſociety and our friends, and reſpectable in life. Human knowledge, it muſt be confeſſed, is in many articles extremely limited. The buſineſs, the avocations, even the neceſſary amuſements and refreſhments of life, employ a great part of our time. But, notwithſtanding theſe diſadvantages, much might be done, much important information might be obtained, were we to ſpend, in ſearching for new ideas, what portion of time ſtill remained unoccupied. Induſtry, properly directed, would be attended with ſignal acquiſitions, and in this field nothing but induſtry can avail. Genius cannot begin to operate with advantage, till the mind has procured materials, numerous, valuable, and various. The end of education is to direct us in making theſe acquiſitions; but it is not to be expected, conſidering the immenſity of the field we traverſe, at a time of life when our heads

are giddy, and our faculties unaccuſtomed to inveſtigation, that we ſhould make very much progreſs in appropriating what we learn. The acquiſition of new ideas ſhould be the buſineſs of the beſt part of life, and no man ever accumulated a large treaſure of them, who derived them not from his own application. Obtain, therefore, all the knowledge you can of ſcience, of arts, of nature, of ſociety, of manners, laws, and cuſtoms. Endeavour to gain great and comprehenſive views of men and things in all your reſearches and inquiries, and let theſe views ſerve as foundations of your judgements and reaſonings in all your particular purſuits.

2. Endeavour to attain accurate ideas of the information you receive, which requires two operations, firſt, to compare ideas with their archetypes; ſecond, to compare them with the eſtabliſhed meaning of the words by which they are denoted.

I need not employ much time to evince the neceſſity and utility of this rule. Unleſs accuracy be obtained, all our labour and ſearch are in a great meaſure thrown away. If the foundation be not properly prepared and ſecured, the ſuperſtructure can never be finiſhed with beauty and ſtrength. Inaccurate ideas are little better than no ideas; they are ſometimes worſe. In reſpect of every deduction reſulting from them, they are not preferable to ignorance, becauſe ſuch deduction can-

not be legitimate. But this is not their only inconvenience; they lead us to ſuppoſe ourſelves well-informed when we are not ſo, and, of courſe, expoſe us to all the mortification which attends the detection of error, and to all thoſe irkſome contentions which ariſe from controverſies about the meaning of words.

In comparing ideas with their archetypes, nothing more is requiſite than patience and attention; for, by the exerciſe of theſe qualities, we ſhall render our ideas as adequate and accurate as it is in our power to make them. We ſhould, for this purpoſe, carefully and repeatedly make compariſon, particularly of ideas which lead to conſequences of importance, or which relate to topics of ambiguity or difficulty.

Of the three kingdoms of nature, as the writers on natural hiſtory expreſs themſelves, animals, vegetables, and inanimate matter, the objects generally remain as long as we pleaſe under our examination, and we have ſufficient time to attend to every particular neceſſary to be known. In the demonſtrative ſciences, alſo, mathematics and arithmetic, our ideas of principles at leaſt will be accurate; and it is ſeldom that our conceptions, even of proofs and concluſions, are liable to ambiguity. The preciſe and defined nature of the ſubjects of theſe ſciences, the ſimple and perſpicuous language in which moſt writers have agreed to

communicate them, render it almoſt impoſſible for a reader endowed with ordinary attention not to comprehend diſtinctly the ſenſe intended to be communicated.

It is, then, in the ſciences ſuſceptible only of probable proof, in morals, in politics, in metaphyſics, in writings which convey miſcellaneous truth, as hiſtory, criticiſm, but particularly in controverſial writings, and in converſation, that the hazard of inaccurate ideas is very conſiderable, and the probability of avoiding them altogether is exceedingly ſmall. One great ſource of ambiguity, in all theſe caſes, is the indefinite nature of the ſubjects, and the different aſpects under which they appear to different inquirers; but the greateſt ſource is the unavoidable ambiguity of language, and the difficulty of aſcertaining exactly the meaning of words. This double indiſtinctneſs, both of the ſubjects and of the means of communication, cannot fail to produce important conſequences in all our opinions and reaſonings; and the ſubject is of too much moment not to obtain a little more of our attention.

LECTURE III.

RULES CONCERNING IDEAS AND WORDS.

TO penetrate to the bottom of the doctrine of ambiguity, as it relates both to thoughts and language, and to provide every poſſible preſervative againſt it, I begin with obſerving, that, in reſpect of ſimple ideas, all mankind are nearly agreed, both about the archetypes and the expreſſion of them, as ſoon as they are acquainted with the objects that ſuggeſt them, and underſtand the language of which the expreſſion makes a part. Simple ideas are not very numerous, and they are called ſimple, partly becauſe they admit no diviſions into parts, but chiefly becauſe, in receiving them, the mind is perfectly paſſive, and cannot acquire them without an actual ſurvey of the external objects which ſuggeſt them, or an actual feeling of the mental operations which produce them. The

chief ſimple ideas are thoſe of the qualities of external objects, light, colours, taſtes, ſmells, ſounds; thoſe of the operations of the mind, perception, judgement, reaſoning, willing; and thoſe of pleaſure and pain, power, extention, unity, exiſtence, which are derived partly from the ſenſes, and partly from reflection. There is no method of conveying any knowledge of theſe ideas, but by preſenting their archetypes to the external or internal percipients; and if a perſon be deprived of any of the ſenſes which ſhould convey the knowledge of them, no words, no ſigns, no known mode of communication, can ſupply that defect; he muſt for ever remain in ignorance. If a perſon be deprived of ſight, for example, he muſt be deſtitute of all conceptions of light and colours. If he require an account of thinking or willing, of pleaſure or pain, we can only refer him to experience.

About theſe ideas, then, no controverſy can exiſt; becauſe, as all men muſt receive them from their archetypes, and, of courſe, all men muſt receive either the ſame impreſſions, and muſt have theſe impreſſions conſtantly ſuggeſted by the words allotted to denote them; or, even if they receive ſomewhat different impreſſions, they muſt ſpeak and reaſon about them as if they were the ſame; for every perſon can ſpeak and reaſon only about the ſimple ideas in his own mind. For example,

it is reaſonable to believe, that the idea of the colour denoted by the word *green* is the ſame in the minds of all men; but, though there were ſome difference of idea in different men, yet it could not perhaps be detected, for every perſon muſt ſpeak and reaſon concerning that colour from the idea of it he poſſeſſes.

The next claſs of ideas, about which, and the words that denote them, little difference or ambiguity can take place, conſiſts of thoſe complex ideas, which reſult from collections of ſimple ideas of the ſame kind. Theſe are the firſt remove from ſimple ideas; and as ſimple ideas are clear and intelligible, the compoſitions made out of them partake of the nature of their conſtituent parts, and are likewiſe clear and intelligible. The two ſciences ſuſceptible of demonſtration preſent collections of ſuch ideas, and, on this account, among others, they are capable of that high ſpecies of evidence. All the operations in arithmetic, however complex, never exhibit any collections of ideas, which reſult not from different combinations or fractions of the ſimple idea of unity. All the enunciations and demonſtrations of mathematics, however compounded and refined, contain no ideas which are not formed from combinations of the ſimple idea of extenſion. All the triangles, circles, ſquares, and parallelograms, about which the mathematician is

converſant, exhibit only different views and combinations of the ſame ſimple idea of quantity. About ſimple ideas, of courſe, and thoſe ſciences which involve combinations of them, men have differed very little, either in the conceptions of them, or in the language that denotes them.

Thus far our path is luminous and patent; here, however, the field of perfect light terminates, and the next ſtep lands us in ſome degree of darkneſs and obſcurity. When we enter the confines of the other ſciences, morals, politics, criticiſm; when we contemplate the ſubjects of miſcellaneous knowledge, oratory, poetry, hiſtory, eſſays, or attend to the buſineſs of arts and common life, we immediately encounter complex ideas, comprehending large groups of ſubordinate ideas, and theſe groups compoſed not of combinations of the ſame ſimple idea, but of combinations of different ideas, partly ſimple and partly complex, and we find it almoſt impoſſible to avoid miſtakes. When we examine, for example, the ideas denoted by the word *beauty*, a word in every body's mouth, when ſpeaking of truth, arts, and animals, we are amazed at the multiplicity it includes, and the combinations it exhibits. When applied to truth, it denotes ſome important propoſition, eſtabliſhed by a clear, but a refined train of proof; as when we ſpeak of a beautiful theorem, or a beautiful diſcovery. When applied to animals, it includes the ideas of ſhape,

colour, utility, fenfibility, acquired bodily and mental accomplifhments, youth, health, gracefulnefs: When applied to arts, it includes uniformity, variety, high polifh, convenience, utility; as when we fpeak of a beautiful woman, or a beautiful picture.

Taste another word in frequent ufe among men of genius, and lovers of the fine arts, and it alfo will ferve to illuftrate to what ambiguity communication is in many cafes unavoidably expofed. It fignifies that fenfibility to the beauties of nature, genius, and art, which refults from a found ftate of the imagination, and the underftanding, and which leads us to diftinguifh, and properly prize, thefe beauties. It is plain, that much ground of difference is laid in the nature of the objects of this internal fenfe, becaufe every man muft judge from the ftate of his own faculties, and the cultivation of the faculties of no two men, perhaps, is entirely equal. Their ideas of the objects of tafte muft fhare a fimilar difference, and muft correfpond to the ftate of their refpective faculties. It were eafy to multiply examples; but it will appear from thofe I have adduced, that a double fource of ambiguity prevails with refpect to the ideas and words I have mentioned, and many more fimilar ideas and words, which every day occur in books and in bufinefs. The ideas which compofe a complex idea may real-

ly be different in different men's minds, according to the improvement of their faculties or powers of perception; but the greateſt hazard of error reſults from the inattention with which the complex idea may be formed. Thus, one man may omit ſome of the ideas which compoſe the complex ones of beauty and taſte; others may add to them more ideas than they naturally and juſtly contain.

Another great ſource of ambiguity in every inquiry where body or ſpirit is concerned, is the nature of ſubſtances, whether corporeal or ſpiritual. What ſubſtance is, we are utterly ignorant. All we can conceive of it is, that it ſupports qualities, and, of courſe, all our ideas of ſubſtances are nothing more than collections of the qualities we have found to belong to them reſpectively. Now, if any perſon form not the ſame conception with us of any of theſe qualities, or if he either add to, or diminiſh their number, it is plain that his complex idea of the ſubſtance can never agree with ours, and that in all communication concerning it, we and he muſt miſunderſtand one another.

From theſe obſervations, the following important practical rules will be allowed to reſult, as the beſt preſervatives againſt ambiguity.

1. In all caſes, when complex ideas come under our conſideration, we ſhould employ every precaution to render our collection of the conſtituent ideas as complete and accurate as poſſible; and whenever

we diſcover that our reaſonings and concluſions diſagree with the reaſonings and concluſions of thoſe with whom we converſe, or whoſe books we read, we ſhould ſtop and re-examine both the conſtituent ideas, and the expreſſion of them, becauſe it is a thouſand to one, that in the re-examination we ſhall diſcover the cauſe of the difference.

The propriety and utility of every part of this rule appears ſo obvious, as hardly to need any illuſtration. Happy had it been for the peace of ſociety, fortunate had it been for the progreſs of knowledge, if it had always been punctually practiſed. All thoſe irritating and frivolous diſputes which peſter converſation, almoſt all thoſe controverſies which have diſturbed and diſtracted the world, would have been prevented. Conſult the controverſies which have involved, not individuals only, but claſſes and periods of learned men, and you will find that they have originated chiefly from miſapprehenſions of the ideas and terms which furniſh the ground of the difference, and that, if the parties had exerciſed any patience and pains to underſtand one another, before they began to diſpute, they might have prevented much trouble and vexation to themſelves, and much contention and diſturbance to ſociety.

The famous controverſy concerning the ſuperior merit of ancient or modern learning, which inte-

refted and divided almoft all the learned men of Europe in the end of the feventeenth and the beginning of the eighteenth century, and which ftill interefts, and fometimes divides, learned men, appears a pertinent illuftration. It is a controverfy about the meaning of words, and affords very little ground of difference of opinion, when the terms are fully afcertained. The parties have never confidered, that no comparifon of authors can exift, except in circumftances perfectly fimilar. If the ftate of ancient fociety gave encouragement to fome efforts of genius and induftry, which are not now prompted by fimilar incitements, can we wonder, that thefe efforts fhould be more brilliant in the former fituation, than they are found to be in the latter? If oratory, ftatuary, architecture, and perhaps poetry, received fuperior countenance and patronage in Greece, than they found even in Rome, and much more than they have found in modern times, is it not natural to expect, that their exhibitions fhould be more deferving of applaufe?

If, on the other hand, the moderns poffefs fuperior knowledge of the fyftem of nature, from the advantages which the progrefs of fcience has thrown into their hands; if the improvements of government, and the extenfion of refinement and knowledge, have led them to excel in politics, in moral refearches, and in the greater part of the ufeful arts, can we be furprifed at their fuperio-

rity? It was impoſſible that the moderns could rival the ancients in the former caſe; it is equally impoſſible that they ſhould equal us in the latter. The ſuperiority in the one caſe, or the inferiority in the other, is no compliment to, or impeachment of, the genius of either; it is the natural conſequence of the different ſituations of human affairs, and could not, without a miracle, have been otherwiſe. Had the keen combatants in this controverſy attended to this natural ſtate of the caſe, they would have forborne their ill-founded and injurious recriminations. The patrons of modern literary merit unjuſtly meaſure the merits of ancient genius by a ſcale adopted from modern ideas and manners; the patrons of ancient genius retaliate the ſame game, and pretend to determine the eminence of modern genius by a ſcale derived from the ideas and manners of ancient times. Let theſe reaſonable limitations be admitted, and the ſhadow of a controverſy, I believe, would vaniſh; the difference would at leaſt be found to be ſo frivolous, as to ſatisfy every body of the abſurdity of the conteſt.

2. After aſcertaining the amount of a complex term by enumeration, by deſcription, or by definition, employ it always in the ſame ſenſe, without adding to, diminiſhing, or changing the ideas it denotes.

Enumeration, commonly called division by logicians, is a recapitulation of the subordinate ideas of which a complex idea consists, and forms a very satisfactory method of explaining or ascertaining that complex idea. For example, the term gratitude includes the following subordinate ideas; a consciousness of favour received, a disposition to acknowledge it on every proper occasion, and a resolution to seize the first opportunity of returning a similar favour to the benefactor. Honour, in like manner, includes an unalterable regard to truth in words, humanity and generosity in actions, candour and forgiveness in thoughts, and resentment of insult or affront.

Description, also, is a sort of enumeration, but is applicable chiefly to objects of sight. It is used often to distinguish objects of sight, which have not obtained names, or of which the names are unknown. We describe a landscape, a river, a house, a town, a ship, a horse, a tree, a robber, in order to communicate ideas of these objects to those who have not seen them, or to enable those to distinguish them when they do see them. Description is a recapitulation of the parts or properties of the object described. A landscape, for instance, contains corn-fields, plantations, water running or stagnating, hills, houses, villages, animals, situate in such a manner as diversify it from all other landscapes. The colour, shape, strength, gentleness, fleetness,

and eafy motion, which conftitute the defcription of my horfe, difcriminate him from all other horfes. A deferter, or a robber, is defcribed by his ftature, figure, complexion, features, and drefs, or, in other words, by a recital of the particulars which form his appearance, and which mark him out among other men.

Definition is the laft method of afcertaining complex ideas or general terms, and differs not effentially from the preceding methods. The chief difference is the ufe of it on different occafions. It may be employed in fixing complex ideas of all forts, whether their archetypes are objects of the external fenfes, or are the creatures of reflection, that is, whether they exift in matter or in mind. It is ufed, however, chiefly to afcertain fpecies, whofe archetypes exift in the mind. A good definition confifts of two parts; by one part are marked thofe objects with which the thing defined has any common qualities; by the other part are marked thofe qualities which characterife the thing defined alone. Nothing more can be done to afcertain the nature of any object, than to point out thofe objects with which it has any common qualities, and next to enumerate the qualities peculiar to itfelf. Hence the logical rule, that every definition fhould confift of a genus and a fpecific difference, the genus denoting the common qualities,

and the ſpecific difference the characteriſtic or peculiar ones.

Suppoſe, for example, it were required to define what the mathematicians call a ſquare, or a parallelogram, theſe moſt accurate of all logicians will tell us, that "a ſquare is a figure which has four equal ſides, and four right angles," and that "a parallelogram is a figure that has four angles, and four ſides, the oppoſite angles and ſides only being equal."

The things defined are ſpecies, that is, the ſquare and the parallelogram are not a ſquare and parallelogram which exiſt in ſome book, or are delineated on a particular board; they ſtand for the entire ſpecies of ſquares and parallelograms, and mark the properties common to all the individuals of theſe ſpecies. The firſt part of the definition refers them to their genus, or characteriſes them by the name of figures, by which it is ſignified, that they have ſomething in common with all other mathematical ſpecies, circles, triangles, rhombuſes, ellipſes, namely, they include ſpace, and are bounded by lines. The ſecond part of the definition exhibits their ſpecific difference, or enumerates the peculiar properties which diſtinguiſh them from all the other ſpecies of the ſame genus; ſquares have four right angles, and four equal ſides, parallelograms have alſo four angles and four ſides, the

oppofite angles and fides only being equal, which no other fpecies have but themfelves.

If I define eloquence to be the art of fpeaking or writing well, logic the art of reafoning well, ftatuary the art of forming an exact refemblance of the human fhape in marble, painting the art of delineating a refemblance of the fame fhape on canvas by means of oil colours, I refer all thefe fpecies to their genus, and mark properties in which they all agree, namely, in being arts, or fomething acquired by induftry and practice, and then I mention the properties which diftinguifh thefe arts from all other arts, and from one another; eloquence by fpeaking or writing well, logic by reafoning well, ftatuary by forming a refemblance of the human fhape in marble, painting by delineating a fimilar refemblance on canvas.

If, again, I define morality to be the fcience which teaches to be wife, virtuous, and happy, politics the fcience which teaches to provide for the profperity of communities, or large bodies of men, mathematics the fcience which teaches to compute quantity, pneumatics the fcience which teaches the properties of fpirits, or the doctrine of fluids, optics the fcience which teaches the theory of vifion and colours; I refer, firft, all thefe branches of knowledge to their next genus, fcience, by which I fignify, that they all agree in prefenting fome ufeful truths to the mind, and that they are fup-

ported by ſatisfactory evidence. In the ſecond place, I diſtinguiſh each ſcience from the reſt, and from all other ſciences not mentioned, by ſpecifying as above the particular truths which it inculcates.

Definition might certainly be employed to diſcriminate complex ideas on every occaſion, and might ſuperſede both enumeration and deſcription; but in all ſuch caſes, the ſpecific difference would become either an enumeration or deſcription. Indeed, there is no material difference between theſe methods of aſcertaining ideas, except in the length of the ſpecific difference. An enumeration, or a deſcription, either includes or ſuppoſes a genus, to which the idea explained refers; and the ſpecific difference of every definition is either an enumeration or a deſcription. For example, the enumeration formerly advanced, of the ideas expreſſed by the word *honour*, may eaſily be converted into a definition, of which the ſpecific difference will become the enumeration itſelf. "Honour is a diſpoſition which prompts us to regard truth in our words, generoſity in our actions, candour in our thoughts, and to entertain reſentment of inſult or affront." In like manner, I may convert the deſcription of a horſe into a definition, of which the deſcription will conſtitute the ſpecific difference. I may call him an animal of a cylindrical body, long and taper legs, high neck, beautiful head, of a bay

colour, gentle temper, eafy motion, and fit for riding. It is to be obferved, however, when the fpecific difference refolves itfelf into an enumeration, or a defcription, it is of little confequence to diftinguifh the genus. On the other hand, when it is of confequence to diftinguifh the genus, the fpecific difference feldom confifts of more than one or two properties. Definition is always ufed in the laft cafe, and enumeration or defcription in the two firft. Enumeration is commonly employed to explain complex ideas, of which it is of little confequence to mention the genus; defcription, to afcertain complex ideas, the archetypes of which are objects of fight; and definition, to afcertain the abftract ideas of fpecies.

With refpect to definition, it is proper farther to obferve, that we muft never attempt to apply it to fimple ideas, becaufe they are immediately derived from perception, prompted by the objects or operations which fuggeft them; and no definition or explication can render them more diftinct or intelligible than they are. Even the mathematicians have not always been fufficiently attentive to this remark. The word *ratio* denotes the idea of equality or inequality, which refults from the comparifon of two magnitudes of the fame kind in point of quantity; as when one of the magnitudes is faid to be equal to, greater or

lefs than the other, or to hold to it fome fixed proportion. The idea appears to be fimple, at leaft no words can make it plainer than the actual comparifon of the magnitudes by which it is prompted. Yet all the editions of Euclid I have feen, previous to the one publifhed by Dr Simpfon of Glafgow, prefent definitions of it. "Ratio," we are told, "is a habitude of magnitudes of the fame kind, according to quantity." Habitude is a word at leaft as unintelligible as ratio; yet it feems no plainer word could be found. The truth is, the definition fhould not have been attempted, and Simpfon has accordingly expunged it.

Motion is another fimple idea, on which Ariftotle, and the fchoolmen after him, have exercifed their ingenuity, and have produced the following famous fpecimen of jargon. They tell us, that motion is "actus entis in potentia, quatenus in potentia," the act of a being in energy, as far as it is in energy. Even later and better philofophers, who define motion by "a paffage from one place to another," do not make the matter much plainer. They only fubftitute one word for another, and it is difficult to decide whether motion is better explained by paffage, or paffage by motion.

As, then, complex ideas only are fufceptible of explication in any of the ways I have mentioned,

if we would preferve perfpicuity, careful attention muft be paid, that the fame meaning, thus fettled, fhall be invariably retained. The determination of this point is fimple and eafy, and may always be accomplifhed by fubftituting the explication in the place of the term defined. If this be practicable, and the fenfe be preferved, we may be confident we have not changed the meaning of the term.

Before I relinquifh this branch of the fubject, I muft obferve, that although, in compliance with the example of all logical writers, I have hitherto confidered, and fhall, through the whole of this courfe, continue to confider, all knowledge as compofed of ideas, and fhall call every impreffion made on the mind, whether derived from an external or an internal archetype, by this name; yet that fome late writers of eminence have called thefe impreffions by other names than that of ideas. All impreffions, then, prompted by archetypes, which have a real exiftence without the mind, they diftinguifh by the name of *perceptions*. All impreffions, of which the archetypes have no real exiftence, but are the creatures of the imagination, as a mountain of gold, a fea of milk, they denominate *conceptions*. Thofe impreffions only they call ideas, which have been formerly received into the mind, and are again recalled by memory. You will find this explanation ufeful in reading fome metaphy-

ſical, and even ſome critical writers; but it is more convenient for our purpoſe, to give the name of *idea* to every impreſſion, whether ſimple or complex, and from whatever ſource it may be derived.

LECTURE IV.

PROPOSITIONS—KNOWLEDGE AND TRUTH WHAT?—DIFFERENT KINDS OF PROPOSITIONS—SOURCES OF HUMAN KNOWLEDGE.

I HAVE explained the nature of ideas, and the power of perception; I have endeavoured to unfold the manner in which they are procured, and the various ſources from which they are derived. I have conſidered them as ſimple, as complex, diſtinct or confuſed, adequate or inadequate, particular or abſtract; and I have illuſtrated at conſiderable length the pains we muſt take, and the rules we muſt follow, in order to have them in the moſt perfect ſtate, and to obtain over them the moſt complete command. All, however, I have hitherto advanced, is a mere preparation of the materials of logic; we have not yet taken the leaſt ſtep to-

wards applying them to any uſe in the inveſtigation of truth and knowledge. To this application I am now to proceed.

The inveſtigation of truth and knowledge conſiſts of two operations. The firſt compares two ideas, or one pair of ideas together, in order to perceive in them agreement or diſagreement; the ſecond compares two ideas by the help of one or more intermediate ideas. The truth or knowledge acquired by the firſt operation is ſaid to reſult from judgement; the truth or knowledge acquired by the ſecond operation is ſaid to reſult from reaſoning. I begin with judgement, and the truth and knowledge which are attainable by its means.

Two preliminary queſtions occur: What is knowledge? and, What is truth? We are familiariſed with theſe words, and we are not diſpoſed to ſuſpect there is any myſtery in their meaning. But it is not perhaps ſo obvious as is generally ſuppoſed; and it is of ſo much importance in our preſent inquiries, that we muſt not proceed without attempting to aſcertain it. Knowledge, then, I aſſert, is the perception of the agreement of ideas with one another; truth is the perception of the agreement of ideas with words. But what, it will again be aſked perhaps, is the ſignification of theſe words, *agreement* and *diſagreement?* I reply, that the ſignification of theſe words is not always the ſame, but varies according to the nature of the

ſcience, art, or ſubject, about which the ideas are converſant. A few examples will be the beſt illuſtration.

In arithmetic and mathematics, the only compariſon of ideas which can take place relates to the equality or inequality of the quantities; agreement denotes equality, diſagreement inequality. When I compare the quantities four and five, I perceive that they are unequal, or that the ideas of them diſagree. I perceive farther, if I add one to four, that theſe two together will form a compound quantity, which will be exactly equal to five, or that the ideas four and one conjoined will agree with the idea five. My knowledge, then, that four is not equal to five, but that four and one are equal to five, is the intuitive perception I have, that the idea of four diſagrees with the idea of five, while the idea of four and one together agrees with the idea of five.

In like manner, from the ideas I have of a right angle, or half a right angle, or from the ideas I have of an acre, and half an acre, I know certainly, that the half right angle diſagrees with, or is a leſs quantity than the whole right angle; that the half acre diſagrees with, or is a leſs quantity than the whole acre; and that if I double the half right angle and the half acre, I ſhall form two compound quantities, the ideas of

which will agree respectively with those of the whole right angle and the whole acre. The perception of the agreement or disagreement of ideas, in all these cases, is the same thing with the knowledge of the equality or inequality of the quantities compared.

If, in natural philosophy, I compare body or matter with divisibility, I immediately discover that divisibility applies to, or is a property of, matter; in other words, I find that the idea of matter and divisibility agree together, and I know that matter is divisible. Agreement, in this case, signifies property or relation, not equality, as in the preceding cases. If I maintain in morals, that a good man is happy; or in politics, that a wise king is a blessing to his people; or in arts, that industry is commonly attended with success; my knowledge of all these maxims is perfectly the same thing with the agreement I perceive between the ideas of a good man, and happiness; of a wise king, and the happiness of his people; of industry, and the acquisition of wealth.

Truth relates to the enunciation of knowledge, and is the agreement of ideas with words. If I assert that the British is a free government, and that the English are more industrious than any other nation in Europe, I maintain truth, because my words actually correspond to accurate ideas of the facts. If, again, I say, that the three angles of a

triangle are equal to two right angles, I express a truth, because it is demonstrable that my words and my ideas agree. Falsehood, on the other hand, is the disagreement of words with ideas; as when it is asserted, that the British government is despotic, or that the three angles of a triangle are equal to three right angles. A mistake is the disagreement of words with ideas, when we supposed that they agree. The ignominious falsehood called a lie, is the disagreement of words with ideas, uttered with an intention to deceive.

Knowledge, farther, is of two kinds, certain and probable. Certain knowledge takes place when the mind is perfectly satisfied of the agreement or disagreement of its ideas. Probable knowledge takes place when the agreement or disagreement of ideas is not so clear as to afford perfect satisfaction, and the degrees of probability are greater or less, according as the satisfaction is more or less perfect.

In judging of the agreement or disagreement of ideas, we must examine them in pairs, and the words in which we express that judgement, from a sentence called a proposition. For example, if the idea of a whole be compared with the idea of a part, it is immediately found that they disagree; and this judgement is expressed by the following proposition: "The whole is greater than any of

its parts." But, if the idea of the whole be compared with the idea of all its parts taken together, it is found that they agree; and this judgement is expressed by the following proposition: "The whole is equal to all its parts taken together."

If the agreement or disagreement be perceived by bare juxta-position of the ideas, without the intervention of any intermediate idea, the evidence of the proposition is said to be intuitive. But, if the agreement or disagreement be perceived by means of some intermediate idea, or train of ideas, the mind then must proceed by steps. It must compare the first idea of the proposition with the first intermediate idea, and pass a judgement on their agreement or disagreement. It must next compare the first intermediate idea with the second intermediate idea, and pass a similar judgement. It must proceed, in like manner, through all the intermediate ideas, and pass similar judgements, till it comes to compare the last intermediate idea, with the latter idea of the proposition; and from all these intermediate judgements, the conclusive judgement is deduced, concerning the agreement or disagreement of the two primary ideas of the proposition. In this case, the evidence of the proposition, declarative of the agreement or disagreement of the two primary ideas, is said to be founded on reasoning.

Hence it appears, that all knowledge, whether it be the offspring of intuition, or the result of rea-

ſoning, is denoted by propoſitions, which expreſs the agreement or diſagreement of ideas; that each propoſition contains two ideas, ſimple or complex, beſides the aſſertion of agreement or diſagreement; and that the propoſition which denotes agreement may be called affirmative, that which denotes diſagreement may be called negative "That the three angles of a triangle are equal to two right angles," is an affirmative propoſition; "that a part is not equal to the whole," is a negative one.

The two capital ideas conſtitute two parts of a propoſition. The firſt idea, or ſometimes ſeveral ideas conſidered as one, is that of which ſomething is affirmed or denied, and is therefore called the ſubject of the propoſition; the ſecond idea, or ſometimes ſeveral ideas conſidered as one, is the property, or quality, or attribute, which is either affirmed or denied to belong to, or to agree with, the firſt idea, and is therefore called the predicate of the propoſition. "The three angles of a triangle are equal to two right angles," is a propoſition, of which the idea of the three right angles forms the ſubject, and the idea of equality to two right angles forms the predicate. The affirmation contained in the word *are* is commonly called by logicians the copula or connective of the propoſition.

Propofitions, farther, are diftinguifhed by different names, according to the clearnefs of the evidence by which the agreement or difagreement of the fubject and predicate is evinced. If the evidence be perfectly fatisfactory, the propofition is denominated certain. If the evidence be not perfectly fatisfactory, it is denominated probable; and it is more or lefs probable, according as the evidence is more or lefs fatisfactory. If the evidence for the agreement of the fubject and predicate balance the evidence for their difagreement, the propofition is called doubtful. If the evidence be ftronger on the fide of difagreement, it gets the name of improbable; and the improbability will be the greater, as the evidence of difagreement fhall increafe. If the propofition bear an affirmation contrary to ideas, it obtains the name of falfe. If the affirmation be conformable to ideas, it is denominated true.

Propofitions, alfo, are divided into univerfal, particular, fingular, and indefinite. A propofition is univerfal, when the fubject of it comprehends an entire genus or fpecies. Thus, "All animals are endowed with life and organization," is an univerfal propofition, becaufe the fubject of it includes, and the predicate applies to, all living creatures, or to a whole genus. "All men are liable to err," is another univerfal propofition, becaufe the fubject includes, and the predicate applies to, a whole fpe-

cies, or every individual of the human race. A particular propofition denotes a limited or partial meaning of the fubject, or fignifies that it does not include an entire genus or fpecies; and, in this cafe, the reftricting words, fome, few, many, &c. ufually precede the fubject of the propofition. For example, "Few men fpend all their time to the beft advantage," "Many men repent of their folly when it is too late," are both particular propofitions, becaufe they include a part only of the human fpecies, to which they refer.

A fingular propofition has an individual for its fubject; as when we fay, "Alexander conquered Perfia;" "Cæfar was affaffinated in the fenate-houfe." An indefinite propofition relates to one individual among many, and is commonly introduced by the indefinite article: "A wife man guides his affairs with difcretion;" "A fool is perpetually betraying his ignorance and impudence." Propofitions likewife are denominated conditional, when they exprefs condition or dependance, "If people break the laws, they will be punifhed;" or relative, if they denote confequence or connection, "Though he fall, yet will he rife again." But diftinctions of this kind feem to belong more to grammar than to logic.

Propofitions fometimes receive different names, according to the kinds of evidence by which they

are supported. The chief of these kinds are, sensation, consciousness, intuition, reasoning, and testimony. It is of consequence to consider propositions with regard to these kinds of evidence, because they lead us to the capital sources of human knowledge.

Thousands of propositions, and much useful knowledge, are derived from the external senses and feelings. By these we are made acquainted with all the objects in nature, which can contribute either to use or to pleasure; and of all the propositions derived from the testimony of these senses and feelings, we never, in the intercourse of life, presume to entertain the slightest doubt. We believe that the city, the house, the man, the horse, the tree, the fish, we behold, really exist, and possess those properties or qualities which we perceive to belong to them. We never hesitate, whether the propositions containing the result of our perceptions respecting them are true. We hesitate as little about propositions significant of the reality of our bodily feelings, and of our desires to gratify them; such as, that hunger, thirst, pain, are uneasy sensations, from which all men wish to be relieved, and that rest after fatigue is a source of pleasure. In all these cases, no means of conviction are presented to the mind, besides perceptions and feelings. The knowledge, accordingly, derived from this source, is often called the dictates of

ſenſe; and the ſentences that denote it are ſometimes termed ſenſible propoſitions.

I have obſerved, that no man, in mixing with the world, or when engaged in buſineſs, can permit himſelf one moment to diſcredit the evidence of his ſenſes, or to diſbelieve the information he receives through that channel. Some philoſophers, however, in ſpeculation, have ventured to queſtion the credibility of this evidence, and have not ſcrupled to conclude, that from any thing we know, all the ſplendid exhibitions of nature and art, with which the world abounds, may be no more than phantoms of the imagination, a magnificent diſplay of ideal ſcenery without reality. They have applied a ſimilar theory to the evidence of internal ſenſation or conſciouſneſs, and, finding it equally unworthy of credit, they have ventured to annihilate the immaterial world alſo; and thus, baniſhing both matter and ſpirit from the univerſe, they have left in nature nothing of real exiſtence, but ideas, and imaginary powers to prompt theſe ideas. A philoſophy ſo bold and tremendous in its conſequences, cannot fail to excite a little of our curioſity; and as it has ſubſiſted long in the world, and has attracted a good deal of attention, ſome account of it may be expected. Even while we purſue this account, we deviate not from the ſubject we have to illuſtrate; becauſe the diſcuſſion tends to eſtabliſh the evidence of the ſenſes, and to

explain the nature of the propofitions which depend on them.

The doctrine of found philofophy refpecting the external fenfes is, that they never deceive us, unlefs in circumftances where we may fufpect deception, and where we are provided with means to detect it. Had men, then, been fatisfied with the evidence of the fenfes, in regard to the exiftence of external objects, no fcepticifm on this fubject could have appeared. But they would not be content with the fact, unlefs they might alfo explain the manner in which it is accomplifhed. On this fubject, accordingly, removed, perhaps, beyond the limits of human comprehenfion, philofophers, ancient and modern, have indulged in fpeculation, till they reached the prefumptuous and enormous conclufions formerly mentioned.

Ariftotle firft attempted to explain the manner in which the mind perceives the exiftence and qualities of material objects, by the following theory. He fuppofed very naturally, that material objects did not exift in the mind, but he maintained that every archetype had in the mind a reprefentative, which he called a form, or a phantafm; that the operations of the mind were occupied entirely about thefe forms or phantafms, and that it knew nothing of the archetypes, farther than that they had a power to excite thefe forms or phantafms. This form or phantafm appears to have been equi-

valent to what we call idea, or at leaſt to have been the immediate cauſe of the idea.

The opinion of Epicurus, though differently expreſſed, ſeems not very different in reality from that of Ariſtotle. He ſuppoſed perception to be accompliſhed by means of exceedingly ſlender images of themſelves, which bodies continually detached in all directions; and that theſe exceedingly delicate forms were admitted to the mind through the external organs of the body, and generated thoſe perceptions which it had of the objects of ſenſe. Lucretius has expreſſed theſe ideas of Epicurus in the following lines:

"Principio hoc dico, rerum ſimulacra vagari
Multa, modis multis, in cunctas undique partes.
Quæcum mobiliter ſumma levitate feruntur,
Ut prius oſtendi, facile uno commovet ictu,
Quælibet una animum, nobis, ſubtilis imago."

Even Locke himſelf has ſo far adopted this ſyſtem, as to admit, that all the qualities of bodies which he calls ſecondary, as thoſe of colours, taſtes, ſmells, have no actual exiſtence in the bodies themſelves; and that the bodies which ſeem to poſſeſs theſe qualities, poſſeſs only a power of exciting the ideas of them in our minds. Thus, heat is not in the fire; there is in it only a power of exciting the feeling of heat in us. Locke, however, ſtre-

nuoufly contends, that the primary qualities of bodies, as he calls them, namely, thofe of folidity, extenfion, figure, really exift in the bodies, and that they are very different from the fecondary qualities, or the powers of exciting ideas in the mind; becaufe body muft ceafe to exift the moment it ceafes to poffefs its primary qualities, but it may continue to exift after it has loft its fecondary qualities.

The doctrine of Locke concerning fecondary qualities, is the foundation of the mighty fabric of fcepticifm I have defcribed. If colours, taftes, fmells, heat and cold, exift not in the bodies which produce them, but are only powers in thefe bodies of exciting ideas of them in us; what fecurity have we that the primary qualities, folidity, extenfion, figure, mobility, are not powers, as well as the fecondary qualities? The reafoning of Locke, that the primary qualities are not feparable from body, while the fecondary qualities are feparable, and that body muft ceafe to exift when it lofes its extenfion or folidity, though it may exift, and lofe its tafte and its fmell, is of little fignificance, becaufe it applies only to the ideas of thefe qualities, and proves no more than that primary qualities poffefs a power of exciting ideas, attended with circumftances different from thofe of fecondary qualities, namely, that the idea of folidity is infeparable from the idea of body, while the ideas of

tafte, and fmell, and colour, are feparable from the idea of body. But all the information the mind has about either fort of qualities is confined entirely to its ideas of them. If, then, ideas may be prompted by fecondary qualities which have no real exiftence, what fhall hinder the ideas of primary qualities from being prompted in the fame manner? Or how fhall we know that primary qualities are more than powers, while fecondary qualities are admitted to be fuch? and if both primary and fecondary qualities be powers only, and not qualities inherent in bodies, for any thing we know, no fuch thing as matter may exift in the universe.

Alarming as thefe conclufions are, the daring and profound genius of Mr Hume was not fatisfied with them, or at leaft he perceived that the fame fpecies of reafoning might be urged againft the exiftence of immaterial fubftances with equal energy. Accordingly, he contends, that all we know of fpiritual fubftances is a few only of their qualities, willing, thinking, perceiving, recollecting, and that our knowledge even of thefe qualities is derived entirely from the ideas we have of them, not from the qualities themfelves; that as, in the material world, ideas may be prompted by powers which have no real exiftence, the cafe may be fimilar in the immaterial world; and, of courfe, there will

be no ſuch thing as ſubſtance, material or immaterial, in the univerſe. There may exiſt in it nothing but ideas, and imaginary powers to prompt theſe ideas.

All this tremendous ſyſtem of ſcepticiſm is no more than an attempt to diſcredit the evidence of the ſenſes, and reſults from a miſapprehenſion of the manner in which that evidence is conveyed. It is not true that the mind perceives nothing but its ideas, and that theſe ideas are not a ſufficient ground for believing the reality of the archetypes by which they are prompted. For, though the idea may be recalled when the object is abſent, yet the idea never would have been in the mind, unleſs the object had been at ſome time preſent, and had ſuggeſted it. The idea is no more than the medium through which the knowledge of the archetype is conveyed, in the ſame manner as the picture formed behind a mirror is the means of conveying, by reflection, a knowledge of the preſence of a perſon whom I am ſo ſituated that I cannot ſee. We cannot doubt of the preſence of the perſon, when we ſurvey his image in the glaſs; and we can as little doubt of the reality of the archetype, when we perceive the idea of it in the mind. Our total ignorance of the theory and manner of ſenſation and perception involves this ſubject in impenetrable darkneſs, and affords field

for metaphyfical fpeculations, which, we are fure, muft be erroneous, but which it is not eafy to evince to be falfe. How the mind obtains the knowledge of material objects, or what is the nature of the communication which fubfifts between body and mind; what an idea is, or of what fhape or fubftance it confifts; we are, and probably will remain for ever ignorant, while we are in this world.

Let us not, then, be mifled, or difturbed with fpeculations which muft be inconclufive, till we are fully informed refpecting thefe important topics. Let us relinquifh fuch vain philofophy to the fceptic or the fophift, who wifh to perplex and confound all inquiries, and to augment the natural indolence of the mind of man, by reprefenting its exertions as inefficient or nugatory. Metaphyfics are an ufeful ftudy, while they trace the operations of the mind in the fearch of knowledge, explain the nature of ideas, and unfold the general principles of fcience; while they examine the properties of bodies, and arrange them into claffes, according as they are poffeffed of common qualities. But when they go beyond thefe bounds, when they pretend to penetrate the nature of fubftances, or to indulge in fpeculations that fuppofe an acquaintance with fubjects, concerning which the limited conftitution of our faculties permits us not to

judge, of all intellectual pursuits they are the most distracting and dangerous. They interfere with all useful investigation; they disgust us with the system of nature; they diminish our love of truth; they repress the nobler powers of the soul; and they involve us in scepticism, if not in atheism.

LECTURE V.

PROPOSITIONS—SOURCES OF HUMAN KNOWLEDGE —PREJUDICES.

MENTAL feeling, or confciousnefs, is a copious fource of knowledge, and furnifhes evidence of the truth of a numerous clafs of propofitions. By it we gain an acquaintance with the human conftitution, particularly with the important operations of the underftanding, the imagination, and the paffions. If I affirm, that the imagination is pleafed with a fine profpect, a beautiful landfcape, an elegant exhibition of art, whether in writing, painting, ftatuary, or architecture; if I affert, that the underftanding is delighted with the difcovery of truth on all fubjects, and in all degrees, from the loweft ftage of probability to the moft triumphant evidence of intuition or demon-

ſtration; if I maintain that all our paſſions were given us for wiſe and good purpoſes; that all the gratifications of them, within the limits preſcribed by reaſon and virtue, are pleaſant, ſalutary, and commendable; and that all irregular gratifications are not only improper in themſelves, but are alſo painful and deſtructive; I have hardly any proof to produce of the numerous propoſitions, which expreſs the various caſes into which theſe views of the human mind may be reſolved, except an appeal to the conſciouſneſs of the perſon I wiſh to convince.

If he ſhall deny that his imagination is captivated with a beautiful ſcene of nature or art; if he ſhall declare that his underſtanding receives no pleaſure in the diſcovery of truth, or that the gratification of a regular paſſion yields him no joy, while the agitation of an irregular one fills him with ſatisfaction; all I can urge is, that he miſtakes his conſtitution, or that the ſtructure of it is different from thoſe of moſt other men. But, if he perſiſts in maintaining the conſciouſneſs of the truth of what he aſſerts, I can only oppoſe a contrary conſciouſneſs on my part. We muſt continue of different opinions, for I can produce no arguments to perſuade him to adopt my ſentiments.

From this view of knowledge it will appear, that many moral and political propoſitions, many which communicate truth, in oratory, poetry, criticiſm, and

business, are principally, if not entirely, supported by consciousness. If I assert, that all men applaud a generous or a grateful action, and detest an unjust or a cruel one; that kings are prone to tyrannise over their subjects, or that the people are disposed to insult and oppose their rulers; that the beauties of eloquence and poetry are felt by all mankind, even the most unpolished and unlearned; that the rules of criticism are nothing more than the theories of emotions and passions; that prudence and industry are the best and surest means of attaining success in business, while folly and idleness are commonly attended with misfortune and contempt; what do I but appeal to consciousness concerning the truth of the propositions I advance? If I gain not immediate assent, all I can do to procure it is, to enumerate examples, by which the opinions I maintain have been verified, and to hold forth these as documents of general consciousness, in support of the judgement I have formed. In a word, in all these subjects, the most satisfactory evidence, and the best theories, are founded on the nature of the human constitution. The most sagacious and successful moralists, politicians, critics, and observers of human affairs, ground their maxims and their observations on the qualities of the mind, of which they are conscious themselves, or of which they discover that others are conscious.

Intuition is another copious source of knowledge, and communicates conviction of the truth of all those propositions which are denominated self-evident. Intuition is the perception of the agreement or disagreement of two ideas on bare juxtaposition, without the intervention of any third idea; and the proposition which expresses our judgement of that agreement or disagreement is said to be supported by intuitive evidence. All the axioms of mathematics and arithmetic, as, "Two straight lines cannot contain a space," "Things equal to the same thing are equal to one another," "Two and three are equal to five," "Two and three are not equal to six;" all the principles adopted in physical science, as, "A body cannot be in two places at the same time," "Nothing can produce nothing," "It is impossible for the same thing to be and not to be;" all the maxims relative to identity, as, "Matter is matter," and, "Spirit is spirit;" from intuitive propositions. All certain reasoning, commonly called demonstration, must begin with a comparison of two ideas expressed by an intuitive proposition; and every proposition, expressive of the agreement of any two intermediate ideas, or of every successive step of the demonstration, must be intuitive. These are the chief cases of intuitive truth. I must, however, observe, before I leave this topic, that axioms of which some philosophers seem to be so fond, and which they

hold forth as the foundations of all ſcience, appear ſo far from being ſuch, that no reaſoning is ever founded on them, and that they are of no eſſential uſe in the courſe of reaſoning. What is an axiom? It is a general propoſition, including a number of particular caſes, and declarative of an intuitive truth, which truth muſt be as obvious, when ſurveyed in any of the particular caſes, as in the general propoſition; and, if this be true, the axiom cannot be of any uſe, for the application of it to the particular caſe can afford no light which the mind did not poſſeſs before that application. I ſhall illuſtrate this remark by a few examples, which will make it very plain.

If I ſay that two and three are equal to four and one, I am perfectly ſatisfied of the equality of theſe two quantities, before the application of the axiom, that "Things equal to the ſame thing are equal to one another," and before I add, that they are both equal to five. The axiom adds no light to my conceptions. It does no more than repeat, in general terms, what was expreſſed more ſimply, if not more intelligibly, in particular terms. If from two lines, each a mile long, I take away reſpectively two half miles, I cannot heſitate a moment, that the remaining half miles are equal to one another, although I had never heard of the axiom, "If equals are taken from equals, the remainders will

be equal." If from a field of an acre in extent, I take away half an acre, and throw it into an adjacent field, I have the most entire conviction that the extent of the first field will be much less than it was before the division, without having recourse to the axiom, "The whole is greater than a part." If I infer that something must have existed from eternity, because something now exists, my conviction is complete, before I reflect on, or perhaps know, the scholastic maxim, "Ex nihilo nihil fit," "Nothing can produce nothing." If I am certain that the sun is above the horizon, I conclude with entire confidence, that he is not also below it, although I am unacquainted with the axiom, "Bodies cannot be in different places at the same time." If, having two lines, one half a mile, and the other a quarter of a mile long, I add to each a whole mile, I am perfectly satisfied that the new line, composed of the mile and half, is longer than that composed of the mile and the quarter. I procure no additional conviction whatever from the application of the axiom, "If equals be added to unequals, the wholes will be unequal."

What judgement, then, shall we hold concerning these axioms, which have made so much noise in the world, which have been considered as the foundations of science, the dictates of common sense, the first principles of knowledge, and of which even the mathematicians, the most accurate

of all logicians, appear to be ſo fond. We cannot heſitate, I think, to admit, though they ſupply the appearance of ſagacity and attention, yet that they are of little importance in reaſoning, and that from them no uſeful truth can be derived. From all the examples I have produced, it is apparent, that they are general expreſſions of truths, which are at leaſt as obvious in the particular caſes included under theſe general expreſſions. Of what ſervice, then, can they be, unleſs they ſhould help us to diſcover new particular caſes, with which we were formerly unacquainted. But this ſervice they cannot perform, for the axiom is not applicable, till we have found, by other means than by its aid, that under it is comprehended the particular caſe.

Neither are they of any uſe to ſilence ſceptics, or perverſe reaſoners, who may be diſpoſed to controvert the plaineſt truths. Suppoſe, for example, I ſhould be told that four and two are not equal to five and one, though both are equal to ſix, and that I might ſilence ſuch an abſurd reaſoner by the help of the axiom, "Things equal to the ſame thing, are equal to one another;" how ſhould this axiom ſilence him? Does it furniſh any new evidence? No! Have I given any proof of it? No; it needs none. Why, then, is he bound to believe it? becauſe he gave his aſſent to it on learning mathematics, and all men admit it to be true. But, might he not have with-held his aſſent in learning

mathematics, as well as now, as no proof was then pretended to be given? Do not all men assent as readily, that four and two are equal to five and one, as they do to the axiom, " Things equal to the same thing, are equal to one another?" The axiom has no evidence to command assent, which every case included in it has not; and if any reasoner be so absurd as to controvert either the axiom or the case, he should be permitted to remain in error, as unworthy or incapable of conviction. The fair inquirer has then reached the true principles of argumentation, not axioms, but the perception of the agreement of ideas, and he must remain satisfied, for the nature of things, and the faculties of the human mind, admit no higher evidence.

That axioms are superfluous, even in mathematical reasoning, seems to be obvious from the manner in which Euclid himself sometimes employs them. He generally mentions them when the cases they include occur, but he sometimes reasons without them. He adopts some propositions as axioms, while he rejects or neglects others equally important, and equally entitled to attention. I shall produce a curious example of his practice in this article, which I believe has not been commonly observed. He proposes, as axioms, that " Things, doubles or halves of the same thing, are equal." Nobody can doubt their truth, but why did he not

inform us he might propofe many more axioms of the fame fort? that "Things triple, quadruple, ten times, a hundred times, any number of times the fame thing, are equal to one another;" which are equally true, if not equally neceffary, with thofe he has thought proper to fpecify. He fhould at leaft have introduced one more of thefe axioms, namely, that things quadruple of the fame thing are equal, becaufe without it, if axioms are neceffary in mathematical reafonings, one of his demonftrations is inconclufive and incomplete.

The demonftration to which I allude is found in the eighth propofition of the fecond book of the Elements, where he infers that two quantities are equal, becaufe each of them is quadruple of a third quantity, though he has produced no axiom which holds forth this truth. Euclid cannot be defended by maintaining that the equality of all quantities, equimultiples of the fame quantity, is implied in the axioms which affert, that "Things, doubles or halves of the fame things, are equal;" becaufe the truth which, in the propofition quoted, he affumes without an axiom, is not more evident than the truths are, to which he has applied axioms. Befides, the accuracy of mathematical reafoning and expreffion certainly required that Euclid fhould have faid fo, if he intended to include the equality of all equimultiples of the fame quantity in that of the halves or doubles of it. The better account of

the matter seems to be, if an axiom was unnecessary in one of these cases, it was equally so in any other; but that, as the cases of the equality of the doubles and halves of the same quantities frequently occurred, they had the good fortune to be honoured with axioms to support them; though the conviction of the mind, and the legitimacy of the demonstration, were as complete without them as with them.

Reasoning supports an exceedingly numerous class of propositions, more numerous, I believe, than all the other kinds of evidence put together. But I mean not now to discuss the nature of it, nor to explain the different degrees of evidence it supplies. That task belongs to the third part of this course, and it is not my intention to anticipate it. I mean to mention here only the extent of these propositions, or the various branches of knowledge which it is the purpose of reasoning to establish and support. Almost all the propositions, then, of science, most of those of the arts, and of business, in a word, those of all cases in which the mind receives either certain or probable conviction by the exercise of its rational faculties, belong to this class. It is not easy to explain the nature of these propositions, without discussing the different kinds of evidence by which they are supported. I therefore defer the illustration of them till I treat of that evidence.

Teſtimony was the laſt ſource of knowledge, and the laſt ſpecies of evidence, which I purpoſed to explain. It is founded in the truſt we repoſe in the veracity of our fellow-creatures, in their intercourſe with one another, and is of very extenſive uſe. All the credit of hiſtory, all the intelligence of places, men, and things, we cannot in perſon examine; all the ſecurity ſociety can confer on life and property in courts of juſtice; all the information of buſineſs and ſocial life; depend entirely on the opinion we have, that men will tell truth in their communications to one another. In many caſes, the evidence of teſtimony affords a high degree of ſatisfaction; but the degrees of ſatisfaction decreaſe, till they degenerate into that equivocal ſtate, in which probability for and againſt truth are ſo equally poiſed, as to leave the mind in a ſtate of ſuſpence.

Two cauſes chiefly induce us to diſtruſt the credibility of teſtimony, ſuſpicion that the relater was not fully informed, or that his intereſt might influence him to utter falſehood. The preſence of either, or of both of theſe cauſes, is a ſufficient reaſon for heſitation. But, where neither takes place, we ſeem to have no reaſon to diſtruſt the information of teſtimony. Truth is congenial to the mind of man. It is more eaſy to tell truth than to utter falſehood. It is not eaſy to utter falſehood with ſucceſs. Some time muſt elapſe before the

mind can acquire thofe habits, and that compofure, which are neceffary to fecure falfehood from the inconfiftency and embarraffment which inftantly proclaim its bafenefs and its infincerity. Though the evidence of teftimony cannot be deemed equivalent to that of demonftration, or to that of the fenfes, yet in moft cafes it would be ridiculous to indulge the leaft fufpicion. That there are fuch cities as Paris, Rome, or Pekin, that Alexander conquered a great part of the weftern quarter of Afia, and that Julius Cæfar was killed in the fenate-houfe, are all facts of which we cannot entertain the fmalleft doubt. The conviction we have of the truth of fuch facts is called certainty, and the impreffion made on the mind by the evidence of teftimony in general, is termed *belief*. The impreffion which refults from divine teftimony, or the evidence of revelation, has obtained the name of *faith*. But a future opportunity will difplay more fully the credibility of teftimony.

I have now explained the nature of propofitions; I have fpecified the different kinds into which they may be divided; and I have enumerated the capital forts of evidence by which they are fupported. From what I have advanced, it has appeared, that all the propofitions into which knowledge may be formed, are refolveable into an affirmation or negation of the agreement of the two terms or ideas of which they confift; and that the judgement the

mind passes on this agreement or disagreement, is then proper and just, when it corresponds to the degree of evidence by which the proposition is supported. The perfection of judgement is, to compare our ideas fairly and candidly, either by juxtaposition, as in the case of intuitive propositions, or by the intervention of intermediate ideas, when proof is requisite, and to pass a decision on that comparison, according to truth and justice, unbiassed by partiality or prejudice, unseduced by fallacious appearances in things, ambiguities in words, or any disposition to deceive, or to be deceived.

As, then, the purpose of all our inquiries is, to discover truth and knowledge, and as the completion of this discovery consists in discerning the agreement or disagreement of our ideas, it is plain that we cannot proceed one step without having constant recourse to the operation of judgement. We exert it immediately in cases of intuition; we exert it at the conclusion of every process of reasoning, in determining whether two principal ideas agree or disagree; and we exert it in every step of that process, in deciding concerning the agreement or disagreement of each couple of intermediate ideas. The candid inquirer, therefore, should study to preserve his mind in a state fitted to perform this operation in a proper manner, and to divest it of all obstructions or incumbrances which may interfere with its success. Without this precaution,

it is vain to pretend to difcover truth, becaufe we fhall only perplex and difcompofe our minds, fpend our time in irkfomenefs to ourfelves, in difturbance to others, and fink deeper in falfehood and in error. After all the candour and patience we can exercife, the inveftigation of knowledge is a painful and laborious tafk; but our labour and time are totally thrown away, without a legitimate exertion of judgement. It is, therefore, a matter of the higheft importance in fearching for truth, to know thofe impediments which obftruct the rectitude of our judgements, and to learn the rules we muft obferve, in order to conduct them with juftice and expedition. This is a fubject deferving moft ferious attention, and muft not be forgotten in a fyftem of logic.

Erroneous judgements are denominated prejudices, or rafh judgements, that is, judgements paffed before we have duly examined all the circumftances of the cafe on which we intend to decide. Prejudices generally relate to opinions; prepoffeffions, to attachments; the former refer chiefly to things, the latter to perfons. But I intend here that prejudices fhould comprehend all the impediments which interfere with our forming judgements of every fort, whether refpecting things or perfons. Prejudices are arranged by Lord Bacon under four heads, which he calls, in the language of the fchools, Idola Tribus, the prejudices of the fpecies; Idola

Fori, the prejudices of language; Idola Specus, the prejudices of the individual; and Idola Theatri, the prejudices of authority. These terms, though scholastic, are extremely significant. It is seldom we find the language of the schoolmen so replete with meaning. Prejudices are not improperly distinguished by the title of Idola; because they occupy the place of truth in the mind, in the same manner as the idol attracts in the temple, the devotion which belongs to the Author of nature.

The Idola Tribus are the prejudices common to all mankind, and arise from the natural imbecillity and vanity of the mind, or from the influence which imagination, passion, affection, and attachment, have upon the operations of the understanding. The Idola Fori include the erroneous judgements into which we are led by the inaccuracy or the abuse of language. The Idola Specus comprehend those prejudices which result from peculiar circumstances, from constitution of mind or body, from education, from habit, or from accident. The Idola Theatri are the errors into which we are decoyed by public opinion, by authority, by custom, by fashion, or by any other means which mankind employ to pervert the judgements of one another. These divisions contain, if not all, at least the most material of our prejudices. I shall therefore resume them, and point out the particulars con-

tained under each. I begin with the prejudices of the ſpecies.

Though the human underſtanding, aſſiduouſly employed and properly directed, might have proceeded much farther than it has done in the inveſtigation of knowledge, yet, ſo limited are its powers, that there is much reaſon to apprehend its progreſs, in the moſt favourable circumſtances, cannot be very great. Thouſands of ſubjects daily occur, concerning which we are totally ignorant, and concerning which any induſtry we can exert cannot be ſuppoſed to remove that ignorance. The ſubſtance and many of the operations of all exiſtences, corporeal and ſpiritual, are now, and perhaps will remain, altogether unknown. We comprehend nothing of either, but a few of their qualities. All the aſſimilating powers of nature, by which animals are produced, and reared, and live, and act, by inſtinct or deſign; by which plants grow to various ſizes, conſiſt of texture ſo different, diſplay colours ſo beautiful and ſo numerous; and by which minerals ſo precious, and ſo diſſimilar, are formed in the bowels of the earth; conſtitute an immenſe field of inquiry, in a great meaſure beyond our reach. All inveſtigations which involve the idea of infinity, whether with regard to excellence, ſpace, or time, exceed our comprehenſion; becauſe of infinity we have no adequate conception, and can only approach it negatively by diſcovering what it is not.

All inquiries, alfo, about futurity, however anxioufly purfued by men in all ages and fituations, furpafs the human powers of refearch, if we except the very fhort progrefs which the fagacity of fome men may make, guided by the imperfect and fallible aid of experience and analogy.

Limited, then, as the mind of man is in its inquiries, by the nature of many fubjects themfelves, and numerous as ftill are the fields of acceffible knowledge, untouched or unexplored; fuch, notwithftanding, is its vanity, its folly, or its prefumption, that more perhaps of its time and its induftry has been employed in fearching for what is not to be found, than in inveftigating what was ufeful and intelligible.

Is it not deplorable, that fo much ingenuity fhould have been thrown away, even in enlightened times, on fceptical and ufelefs inquiries concerning the nature and exiftence of matter and fpirit, without attending to what is of real importance, the qualities and operations of both, from which ufeful knowledge concerning them might have been deduced? Is it not equally lamentable, that the true methodof profecuting the ftudy of nature fhould have been unknown till the days of Lord Bacon? and that philofophers fhould have been fo mifled, or fo abfurd, as to retire to their clofets, and to form theories to account for the phæno-

mena of the heavens and the earth, without consulting the facts which they every day beheld?

But all the abuses and misapplications of human ingenuity combined, furnish nothing equal to those of the schools for near five hundred years, from the middle of the eleventh century to the revival of learning in the sixteenth. Never did any set of philosophers labour so strenuously and successfully to enlighten the mind of man, and to promote the discovery of truth, as the schoolmen did, to confound all human inquiry, and to interrupt all progress in knowledge. Never were subtilty and ingenuity employed so preposterously, in pretending to teach the method of investigating truth, and exposing error, without communicating any useful information.

LECTURE VI.

PREJUDICES.

VANITY and presumption have not been engaged more succesfully in obstructing the progress of general knowledge, than the imagination, the passions, and self-interest, have been employed in clouding the mind with prejudices respecting society, business, arts, and social intercourse. National partialities are so insuperable in the most enlightened and civilised periods, that it seems impossible for the people in general of any nation, to do justice in the judgements they form, of the capacity, the ingenuity, the courage, or the integrity of their rivals. The proud Jews of old treated all the rest of mankind with contempt; and if they admitted them to be creatures of the Author of nature, they accounted them unworthy of hi

care, monopolising his attention and his providence to themselves. The Greeks, vain of their enterprise, their learning, and their arts, considered all other nations, even the refined and luxurious Persians, as barbarians, and held in little estimation their manners, their arts, and their fidelity. The Athenians represented their rivals the Spartans as ignorant, rude, ambitious, and as destitute of every quality except stratagem and patience. The Spartans retaliated the opprobrious epithets of fickle, factious, sophistical, impertinent, of restless, loquacious, turbulent, and ostentatious. The Romans, like the Greeks, stigmatized with the appellation of barbarous the rest of the world. They vilified the military character of the Carthaginians and Macedonians. They ridiculed the mercantile spirit of the former, converted their national faith into a proverb of reproach, and scarcely left them a single civil virtue.

But, though superior liberality of sentiment certainly prevails in modern times; and nations, having much more intercourse, survey their neighbours with less aversion and suspicion; yet there is scarcely to be found, even among men of letters, that candour and generosity, which, disdaining all partial and local attachments, constitute the philosopher, the citizen of the world. All the civilized nations, I believe, of modern Europe, discover among their countrymen, knowledge, genius, and

induſtry, ſuperior to what are to be found in ſimilar circumſtances among any of their neighbours. The French, the Engliſh, the Italians, will not, I conceive, readily yield to one another precedency in ſcience or arts.

In private life, the prevalenc of imagination, of paſſion, and of attachment, extinguiſhes almoſt every ray of impartiality and juſtice in the judgements of men. The power of imagination is ſo prevalent in ſome minds, as to render them altogether impatient under the irkſome operation of comparing ideas; and they haſten to any judgement, however erroneous, rather than continue in a ſtate of ſuſpenſe. The greater part of mankind are guided more by their imagination and feeling, than by reaſon. An analogy or a figure influences them more than an argument. They will go with the multitude, however miſguided, rather than ſtand ſingle on the ſide of juſtice and truth.

The paſſions pervert judgement ſtill more than the imagination, and there is hardly any thing we wiſh to think right and reaſonable, which we will not quickly find arguments for judging to be ſo. The ſpirit of party, and the paſſions it prompts, appear on many occaſions to eradicate every idea of equity, candour, and conſiſtency. Men oppoſe to-day what they ſupported yeſterday; they reprobate meaſures as void of faith, honour, and integrity, which they formerly maintained to be the re-

fult of wifdom and difcernment, and the fource of the moft important public good. When our own intereft comes in competition with that of others, it is almoft impoffible to furvey the fubject of difpute with an impartial eye. In all fuch cafes, men of candour, confcious of their imperfection, renounce judgement altogether, or endeavour to contemplate their fituation and attachments in the light they could view thofe of neutral perfons. It is indeed exceedingly difficult to emancipate the mind entirely from thefe caufes of erroneous judgement; but every inquirer fhould make the attempt, as he may be affured his refearches otherwife will never be attended with pleafure or fuccefs.

The Idola Fori, which originate from language, the great inftrument of focial communication, form the fecond clafs of prejudices. The capital inconveniencies they occafion, refult from the ufe of words which have no meaning, or which bear, in our apprehenfion, a meaning more or lefs extenfive than they ought to have. I am, however, fortunately relieved from the neceffity of recapitulating and expofing them, by what I advanced in a former lecture concerning the ambiguities of general terms, and the manner of afcertaining them by enumeration. What I there obferved refers, indeed, to the enunciation of fingle ideas; but no more is neceffary to obtain a diftinct and juft judgement. If

language exhibit ſingle ideas perſpicuouſly and fully, it has done all that can be expected from it. If an erroneous judgement ſhall ſtill be paſſed, the underſtanding muſt bear the blame, wh ile the e-preſſion will deſerve no cenſure.

The next claſs of prejudices, denominated Idola Specus, include all thoſe errors in judgement into which men are ſeduced from circumſtances peculiar to themſelves, from the conſtitution of their minds or bodies, rank in life, education, or courſe of ſtudy.

Infinite almoſt is the variety of the external appearance of the human race, and no leſs various, perhaps, are the conſtitutions of the minds of men. For this reaſon, unanimity is not to be looked for, even concerning buſineſs, and the common intercourſe of life, far leſs concerning ſpeculative tenets of difficult conception, probably in ſome caſes of exceptionable evidence. If judgements are formed by candid men on ſuch topics, they will be different, ſuitable to the different aſpects in which the objects appear to their reſpective apprehenſions. No inconvenience enſues from theſe different judgements, either in affairs, or in ſpeculation, if men are animated by charity, and proper reſpect for the opinions of their neighbours, as well as for their own. They add variety to converſation and to action, correſpondent to the difference which nature has eſtabliſhed in the individuals of

the ſpecies. They inſpire patience and toleration, which afford exercife for ſeveral of the moſt amiable and ſocial virtues.

If any nation, then, or large ſociety of men, pretend to be unanimous about tenets, ſpeculative in their nature, and remote from vulgar comprehenſion, thoſe of religion itſelf not excepted, the whole almoſt of the judgements from which that unanimity ſprings, muſt be indigeſted, if not inadequate; that is, they muſt be the judgements of teachers or leaders, adopted without examination. The greater part of the followers are incapable of forming opinions for themſelves, on account either of the imbecillity of their faculties, or the abſtract nature of the topics; and of courſe their aſſent, founded on pretended judgement, is no better than acquieſcence in the judgements of thoſe they revere, concerning ſubjects which they do not fully underſtand.

But though ſyſtems of eſtabliſhed tenets, whether political, philoſophical, or religious, are certain ſources of many imperfect judgements, and ſhould be embraced with caution; yet in ſome caſes, particularly thoſe of religion, they are perhaps neceſſary, if not altogether harmleſs. They are at leaſt negatively good; and if they do not keep men right, they often prevent their going farther wrong. The body of the people are unqualified to judge concerning the theoretical part of religion, and muſt be led by the opinions of men they account

wiser than themselves. If they are not guided by wise and good men, interested and designing men will take the direction of them. If decency and sobriety are not honoured with the superintendance of their sentiments, extravagance, and violence, and enthusiasm, will assume that command. Nobody can doubt of the propriety of giving the preference to the former guides; nobody can hesitate that the peace and happiness of society require this preference to be maintained by every reasonable expedient.

An established system of religious faith, then, is certainly the combined opinion of the men best qualified to judge, held forth in opposition to the private opinions of all weak, or wild, or wicked men, with the laudable view of keeping the people as near the truth as possible, and of preventing controversies, which are often more pernicious than even heresies, to the comfort, to the improvement, and to the virtue of society. If men could be induced to inquire with candour, and to tolerate with patience and respect the opinions of one another, I should consider a system of any tenets, established by authority, as hostile to truth. But this, I am afraid, is a pitch of refinement not to be expected. The next least inconvenience is therefore to be admitted, and the peace of society is to be preserved, though the understandings of men should be partially circumscribed.

Education, the profeffed purpofe of which is to lead us to the temple of truth by the eafieft and fhorteft road, will not readily be fuppofed to retard or embarrafs our progrefs in that courfe in which it pretends to be a guide. It is, however, certain, that no ftation we can occupy, no difcipline we can undergo, is more frequently prolific of partial judgements. In all periods of fociety, the greater part of teachers have been more concerned to inculcate the philofophy of their fect, or the religion of their church, than the pure doctrines of truth; and the inexperience of youth, with the refpect they naturally entertain for advanced years and fuperior wifdom, cannot often fail to render fuch education a hot-bed of errors and prejudices. Hiftory and experience teem with examples of the fertility of this foil, and teach, in the ftrongeft language, the neceffity of the moft affiduous attention, to prevent or eradicate the plentiful crop of noxious plants with which it is in hazard of being over-run.

The fundamental error, perhaps, of education, has confifted in addreffing truth, whether prudential, moral, or philofophical, to the memory rather than to the underftanding. It is commonly fuppofed, if a great deal of information be lodged in the mind, and committed to the cuftody of faithful recollection, that it will prove a plentiful and ufeful magazine, from which the pupil may

draw with facility and advantage every supply he may need in the conduct of life. But it is unfortunately forgotten, that accumulation of truth is only half the business of instruction, and is not even the more important half. The more important part is to acquire the habit of employing to some good purpose the acquisitions of memory, by the exercise of the understanding about them; and, till this habit be acquired, these acquisitions will not be found of very great use.

With regard to prudential truth, or the conduct of a pupil respecting his instructors, his parents, his friends, his equals, his attachments and amusements, the great fundamental rule seems to be, that good behaviour is both his duty and his interest, and that upon his observation of it his treatment and gratifications will depend. If the uniform and discreet conduct of the teacher, or the parent, makes him consider what this behaviour is, and forces him to reason about the practice of it, he will be happy and satisfied, he will be attentive and civil to others, and he will be prepared to judge for himself in the conduct of life, when he shall be obliged to think and act without direction. But if he have no rule of conduct but the dictates of every sudden whim which may arise in his own fantastic imagination, or which the occasional indulgence or severity of an indiscreet superintendent may suggest, his conduct will be the result of

foolish attachments or averſions, of caprice, or of paſſion. His wants will be multiplied beyond the bounds of nature, and the circumſtances of his ſituation; he will be miſerable himſelf, diſguſting to others. Advice and inſtruction will have with him no uſeful influence. His ſubjection to authority will be his utter averſion, becauſe it interferes with his gratifications. His application to ſtudy will be diſagreeable, becauſe he has no conception of the utility of knowledge. From ſuch a train of unfortunate prejudices, what other conduct can enſue than we often ſurvey? Namely, a headlong career of the moſt unlimited gratification, as ſoon as he is emancipated from that mortifying reſtraint from which he has long wiſhed ſo ardently to diſengage himſelf; and an inſurmountable averſion to every path of inquiry and truth, into which it had been the purpoſe of education to lead him.

Though theſe fatal conſequences of improper inſtitution are fortunately not very frequent, yet numerous examples occur of prejudices implanted by the authority of teachers, relative to philoſophical, political, and prudential truth, which have produced effects not a little detrimental. The lectures of philoſophy in ancient Greece, tended more to inculcate the particular tenets of the Epicureans, the Stoics, and the Academics, than the ſcience of human nature, and the doctrines of wiſdom. Ariſtotle was perhaps more anxious to excite admira-

tion, than to extend useful knowledge; to constitute a new sect of inquirers, than to promote the influence of truth. From the abuse, at least of his logic, flowed a corruption of the education of Europe, which for many centuries not only did not point out, but obstructed every avenue to improvement.

That no ray of useful information should have transpired amid all the industry, and acuteness, and even ingenuity of the scholastic doctors, can only be explained from the vanity and futility of the learning they inculcated. When the art of reasoning itself was converted into an engine of sophistry and deceit, when the education of the most learned and elevated members of society consisted in subtle wrangling, and syllogistic disputation, can we wonder that the understandings of men should be debased and disgraced by the admission of the most palpable inconsistencies, and that the stupendous fabric of Popish superstition, the most presumptuous system that ever insulted human reason, should have been then received and established?

The history of Great Britain presents two striking examples of the pernicious effects of the prejudices of education, one political, and the other religious. Charles the First lost his life and his crown by the arbitrary maxims of government he had received from his ancestors. James the Second lost his crown by the Popish education he had

received in France. Though Charles the First is commonly called a martyr to the doctrine and worship of the Church of England, and is accounted by the vulgar to have sacrificed his life in defending her against the bigotry and violence of sectaries, whose hatred to her and him was insatiable; yet it is well known, that his attachment to that church was neither the first nor the chief cause of the discontents which generated and prolonged the civil war. Religious jealousies and fears were then employed, as they have often been, to rouse, and irritate, and alienate the people. But the incroachments on property contrary to law, and the levying of money without consent of Parliament, alarmed all wise men, and excited that tremendous spirit of resistance which terminated in the lamentable fate of the monarch, and the destruction of the constitution, evils that seem to have exceeded in magnitude every wish or conception of the patriots who first opposed the arbitrary measures of the crown. That Charles knew the constitution reprobated the levying of money by his own authority, we have no reason to doubt; but he had been fatally educated in principles which suggested, that cases of necessity, or the wants of princes, were superior to the constitution or the laws; and that, if Parliament refused to grant what supplies he thought necessary, a case of necessity took place,

and he was at liberty to exert his ſovereign power, to provide for the ſalvation of the ſtate.

The education of James the Second in France, and his attachment to Popery, were the ſprings of the Revolution, and of the ejection of the family of Stuart from the throne of their anceſtors. Nothing perhaps but the bigotry of that prince could have ſaved the liberties of this country from extinction. Could he have relinquiſhed his attachment to Popery, could he have ſuſpended or moderated that attachment, he might have reigned without a parliament, and trampled on the laws and religion of his ſubjects. His finances, by economy and good management, were in perfect order, and nearly adequate to the annual expences of government. The calamities and diſaſters of the late civil wars were freſh in the memories of men, and all ranks were reluctant to renew them. The enthuſiaſtic ſpirit which had inflamed the body of the nation againſt his father, had now nearly ſpent its force, and nothing ſeemed wanting to ſucceſs, but to allow the minds of men to cool, and to habituate them to the ſlavery that was preparing for them. The blind zeal, however, of the king, and his intemperate attachment to his religion, for the happineſs of this land of liberty, haſtened every event to a criſis. They ſo completely diſguſted friends and enemies, that the people, with the moſt unprecedented unanimity, puſhed from a throne,

without violence or convulſion, a monarch and a family, who would have ſacrificed the happineſs and peace of a great nation to an abſurd ſyſtem of foreign ſuperſtition.

The Idola Theatri conſtitute the laſt claſs of prejudices of which I have to ſpeak. They generate all thoſe erroneous judgements which reſult from the malignant influence of ſociety, and which may be comprehended under the effects of party-ſpirit, of faſhion, and of authority.

Party-ſpirit has in all ages been the moſt formidable enemy to ſound judgement in philoſophy, in politics, and in affairs. No man, it would ſeem, ever retained either diſcernment or candour to withſtand its ſeduction, after allowing it to get poſſeſſion of his breaſt. The only ſafety for the impartiality of the mind, the only mean of preſerving the ſolidity and equity of its deciſions, is to fly from the evil, and to avoid the infection. If we advance within the ſphere of its attraction, we are undone.

It would be endleſs to enumerate the examples of the baneful influence of this ſpirit, which hiſtory and experience ſo plentifully ſupply. Numerous and violent are the contentions it has produced in ſcience, in religion, and in buſineſs. When engaged in a party, we retain no rule of judgement but the opinion of the people with whom we aſſociate. Every thing they think, or ſay, or do, is right;

proceeds from honourable and useful motives, and is directed to the accomplishment of some important end. All our friends are men of discernment, of integrity, of generosity, of liberal minds, of impartial views, and of great virtues. The case of our antagonists, their motives, qualities, and conduct, are directly the reverse. Their designs are the result of imprudence, folly, or iniquity. Weakness, wickedness, or selfishness, mark all their plans, and disfigure all their operations. They inherit no spark of discretion, enterprise, or public spirit. Truth is thus suppressed or misrepresented; and in all the subjects of contest, there will not be found, on either side, a single sound or impartial judgement.

Religious party-spirit, in former ages, chiefly misled and agitated the minds of men. Happily for the honour and peace of the present age, the influence of this most malignant disposition is now nearly extinguished. The progress of truth and knowledge has not been a little extended and accelerated by this fortunate event. Political party-spirit, however, still keeps strong hold of the minds of men; and the misrepresentations and falsehoods with which it corrupts their hearts, and misleads their judgements, are sufficiently discernible. Did not attachment to party blind the understanding, and obliterate the feelings of modesty and candour, men would be ashamed of the contempt or

neglect with which they receive the plainest truths. On some occasions, indeed, this spirit appears to prompt such partiality, as not only despises the dictates of truth and reason, but disregards even the most important interests of society; provided it may accomplish its favourite objects of ambition. It is the species of prejudice, against which, in this island, it is particularly necessary to fortify the mind, because the temptations to indulge it are very strong, while its effects are most detrimental to public prosperity and peace.

The prejudices of fashion seduce and pervert all mankind. Every thing feels its influence. All ranks are subjected to its power. Manners, arts, language, dress, amusements, studies, science, even laws and religion, are not exempted from its sway. Fashion is, on many occasions, the opinion of the majority of society, or of the more illustrious part of it; and so ductile are the minds of many men, that they consider its dictates as of superior authority to those of reason itself. Of all our prejudices, however, those supported by fashion are perhaps the most justifiable, at least they are often the most difficult to surmount. In all matters of indifference, it would seem, we should submit to fashion; and as we would not chuse to follow any authority, in judging of right and wrong, so it appears unreasonable to be singular in cases where neither is concerned.

The prejudices of fashion are nearly allied to those of authority. They differ only in the extent of the source from which they are derived. Under the former, we are guided by the practice or opinion of the great body of the people; under the latter, we follow the opinions and example of eminent individuals. Authority is most detrimental to all inquiries after truth, and has perhaps obstructed more the progress of knowledge than all other causes conjoined. It has infested and corrupted the investigations of philosophy in all ages. Even the enlightened spirit of the present age is not altogether delivered from its dominion.

Whenever men pretend to teach knowledge, by adopting systems without consulting nature, the influence of authority must be unlimited and indisputable, because the inquirer has sought for no test of truth but the opinion of the author of the system. It is fortunate for knowledge, that this mode of philosophizing is now exploded, and will never perhaps regain establishment. After reigning uncontroulably from the days of Aristotle to those of Des Cartes, it was consigned to oblivion, with all the speculations of this eminent projector, by the sound philosophy of Newton. The general prevalence of the experimental method recommended by Bacon, has gained entire ascendancy in every enlightened nation of Europe.

Had the Cartesian mode of philosophizing conti-

nued to prevail, the true fyftem of nature had remained unknown. It was the banifhment of authority, and the inveftigation of nature, that revealed her fecrets. If the influence of authority fhall revive, the knowledge of thefe fecrets may be withdrawn. Let, then, the opinions of every theorift be examined with perfect patience and impartiality, but never let his authority fupply the place of argument.

LECTURE VII.

RULES TO PREVENT PREJUDICES.

I HAVE now treated pretty fully of prejudices, to prepare us to detect them, and to put us on our guard againſt them, becauſe they are moſt detrimental in the inveſtigation of knowledge. I intimated formerly, that I intended to point out, not only the rocks and ſhelves, which we muſt avoid, but to preſent the compaſs by which we muſt ſteer, in order to perform a ſucceſsful voyage on the hazardous ſea of inquiry. I proceed to perform this promiſe, and to conclude the branch of Logic under diſcuſſion, by ſubjoining a few rules which muſt direct our practice, if we expect to form juſt and uſeful judgements.

I. Beware, of precipitation, and never decide concerning the truth or falſehood of any propoſition, till you have attended to all the preliminaries formerly mentioned: whether the words accu-

rately expreſs the ideas, whether you have diſtinct conceptions of the ideas, whether your minds are diveſted of prejudices, and whether you have fully canvaſſed the evidence.

I do not maintain, that all this precaution is neceſſary to prevent miſtake in every judgement we form. In all ſciences, arts, and affairs, we paſs many judgements without much attention or premeditation, becauſe the agreement or diſagreement of the ideas compared is obvious on the ſlighteſt inſpection. But when the purſuit of truth ſolicits us into new, and perhaps obſcure, paths of inquiry; when we reach judgements, which lead to inferences extraordinary and alarming; or, when our deciſions differ from thoſe of men eminent for capacity and diſcernment, or are likely to involve us in controverſy; we ſhould reiterate, with patient attention, every precaution.

Such a practice is ſuitable to, and is demanded by, the character of a candid inquirer. It may perhaps retard our progreſs, but it will cauſe us to march on ſurer ground. It will habituate our minds to accuracy, and will give us confidence in their operations. It will ſave the irkſome ſenſation which reſults from the detection of precipitation and miſtake; and it may prevent much trouble by excluding errors from theories, which, if careleſsly or raſhly overlooked in their principles, may lay in ruins the labours of many painful hours.

The moſt patient inveſtigators have always been the moſt ſucceſsful inquirers, and the moſt prudent and fortunate men, have generally been moſt remarkable for the candour and the coolneſs of their underſtandings. The two greateſt philoſophers the world ever ſaw, Lord Bacon and Sir Iſaac Newton, are in nothing ſo much ſuperior to all other philoſophers, as in the deliberation and patience with which they proceeded in their reſearches. No confidence, no preſumption, no vain cenſure of the precipitancy of former inquirers, no zeal for party, no partiality to ſyſtem or authority, ever miſlead their minds, or diſgrace their inveſtigations. They ſeek truth alone, and they ſearch for her with the caution of men conſcious of her importance, and of the difficulty of finding her. They embrace her with cordiality wherever they meet her, but they will not adopt ſpeculation for fact, nor be ſatisfied with the ſemblance in place of the reality.

Prudent judgement in buſineſs, chiefly diſtinguiſhes the wiſe man from the fool. The fool frequently poſſeſſes ſenſibility, vivacity, recollection, and information. He is often in theſe articles ſuperior to the man of wiſdom and diſcretion, but he cannot, or will not, make a proper uſe of the materials he has provided. He finds ideas to agree which do not agree. He judges precipitately and erroneouſly. His conduct is directed by his judge-

ments. His opinions, accordingly, expose him to ridicule and contempt, and his actions to reproach and misfortune.

The essence of wisdom, on the other hand, consists in the passing of just judgements on the men, and the things, about which, in the affairs of life, we are called to decide. It is the offspring or companion of discernment, and discernment is nothing more than that prudent examination, previous to judgement, which leads to decide according to truth. The wise man, it is said, sees farther into futurity than other men, or excels in the faculty of anticipation; but this superiority is an evidence only of the accuracy of his judgement relative to things past. He supposes, that future events in similar circumstances will resemble the past. His conceptions of the past are accurate, and he can scarcely err in his opinions of the future.

2. If, after employing every precaution, you still find information incomplete, or ideas not sufficiently clear, suspend judgement till farther investigation or greater experience shall qualify you to decide.

I am aware, that this rule may be supposed to be comprehended under the preceding; because, if we never judge with precipitation, we must, eventually, suspend that operation, whenever the evidence is not satisfactory. But the prudent and rational conduct this rule inculcates, is so momentous, both in

ſcience and in buſineſs, that it appeared to merit a ſeparate enunciation and illuſtration.

A degree of ſcepticiſm, which preſuppoſes a doubt of the truth of every propoſition we have not examined, is requiſite to every candid inquirer. But to many minds heſitation and ſuſpence are uneaſy feelings, and they are impatient to reach a determination. In many inſtances, if we proceed with propriety, we muſt obſerve the neceſſity of ſuſpence of judgement, becauſe our inquiries terminate in ſubjects beyond our comprehenſion The caſes, however, to which I would eſpecially apply this rule, are thoſe in which judgement comes within our comprehenſion ; but we heſitate, either becauſe ideas are not ſufficiently diſtinct, or becauſe we have not diſcovered the intermediate ſteps which ſhew their relation. In ſuch caſes, a candid inquirer muſt ſuſpend judgement, becauſe he can do nothing elſe. Should he go on, it is perfect accident if he reach a juſt determination.

When the mind is embarraſſed and perplexed, it is often proper to relinquiſh the ſubject of inquiry for ſome time ; and to reſume it, after an interval of other employment. Its faculties return to th charge, with new vigour, more experience, quicker diſcernment, and frequently with ſucceſs. But the more common method is, to pore upon the topic which engages attention, and inſtead of ſeeking for intermediate ideas, if it be a ſubject of argument,

or farther information, if it be a matter of fact, the inquirer retires to his closet, and forms theories which have no foundation either in reason or in truth. This spirit is fortunately banished, in a great measure, from the regions of philosophy, but it still remains in politics and in business. A theoretical politician is exceedingly wise in conversation, but his speculations are rarely verified by experience. He proceeds on fallacious principles. He reasons on the supposition, that the motives and conduct of men are what they should be; or that men will act from steady principles of justice or interest. But the far greater part of their actions, are the result of unaccountable attachment or passion, of fancy, feeling, whim, caprice. These can make no part of any theory, because they transcend all rules of calculation, and falsify every conclusion founded on reason and common sense. A man, therefore, who wishes to gain real influence in the world, will never rest resolutions on speculation. He will mix with mankind, and accommodate his opinions to characters and circumstances; and if these lead not to decision, he will patiently suspend judgement, and remain inactive; or he will act so ambiguously, that he may avail himself of better information when it shall occur.

Suspence of judgement, at least suspence in uttering judgements, if they contain any thing harsh, disagreeable, unpleasant, or even unpolite, is par-

ticularly neceſſary in all good company, and among all men of knowledge. Without this exerciſe of civility, we cannot expect to be favoured with the communications of ſuperior information. We cannot render ourſelves acceptable to thoſe from whom we may derive the moſt eſſential benefits. We ſhall diſcompoſe and embarraſs delicate ſociety, we ſhall be expoſed to critical reprehenſion, or involved in controverſy, the bane of all good intercourſe, and inſuperable impediments in the acquiſition of truth.

Modeſty in judgement is peculiarly graceful and promiſing in young inquirers. It is always interpreted in the moſt favourable ſenſe; as a mark of ingenuouſneſs, and a conſciouſneſs of the difficulty of attaining uſeful knowledge; diſpoſitions which powerfully ſolicit liberal and enlightened minds to impart important aid. On the other hand, petulance, forwardneſs, and preſumption, ſubject young inquirers to every diſadvantage, and to many mortifications. They alarm men of ſuperior parts and improvement, and render them averſe to intimacy with perſons from whom nothing is to be expected but irritation or diſguſt. They bring into ſuſpicion the ſoundneſs of their underſtandings; ſo that theſe can hardly obtain the reputation of juſt judgement even when it is deſerved.

3. Be ſatisfied with the evidence which the nature of a propoſition admits.

To decide without evidence, is weakneſs and abſurdity. To be ſatisfied with no evidence, is ſcepticiſm. To demand the ſame kind or degree of evidence for every propoſition, is unnatural and unreaſonable. The propoſitions of ſcience, of arts, and of buſineſs, are ſupported by different kinds of evidence. No candid reaſoner will demand the ſame ſpecies of evidence for them all. He is entitled to no other than the nature of each affords. Few ſubjects admit that complete conviction which excludes the poſſibility of doubt. The far greater part preſent only higher or lower degrees of probability. Though in the ſciences of quantity, the mind proceeds on the firm ground of demonſtration; it would be abſurd to expect equal ſatisfaction in morals, politics, or natural hiſtory, becauſe theſe ſciences are incapable of ſuch evidence. Moral and political propoſitions are ſupported by evidence deduced from the human conſtitution, the order of nature, the happineſs of individuals, and of communities, which is far from being ſo concluſive and direct, as to exclude heſitation, or even difference of opinion: yet theſe propoſitions involve truths very important to mankind. The rewards or puniſhments, aſſigned by their own minds, by the opinions of their fellow-creatures, and by the laws of ſociety, depend upon them.

In natural hiſtory, which furniſhes an account of animals, vegetables, and minerals: In geography,

which ſupplies inſtruction concerning the ſurface of the earth, what parts are covered with land or water, where hills, valleys, capes, cities, are ſituated, tides run, and winds blow: In civil hiſtory, which recounts the tranſactions, opinions, and manners of nations in former times: In the adminiſtration of juſtice and civil government, which applies the laws of the community to the actions of individuals, in order to protect the lives and property of the innocent, and to puniſh the guilty: In the relations we daily receive from foreign countries, concerning the public events of nations, or the induſtry, cuſtoms, and ſentiments of individuals:—In all theſe caſes we muſt depend upon the evidence of teſtimony; and if the information be not in its nature incredible, and we have no reaſon to queſtion the veracity of the relater, we ought to be ſatisfied with that evidence.

Teſtimony is perhaps among the leaſt ſatisfactory channels by which truth is conveyed to the mind. It is leſs ſatisfactory than thoſe of intuition and reaſoning, at leaſt in the ſciences of quantity. It is alſo inferior to thoſe of conſciouſneſs and ſenſation; but it is, notwithſtanding, of high importance to the comfort, peace, and happineſs of ſociety. No inconvenience reſults from following it with diſcretion. Were it rejected, every diſorder and danger would enſue. Man is made to be ſatisfied with it. His ſituation often admits no-

thing more convincing. It was chiefly to vindicate the credibility of this ſpecies of evidence, to which inquirers ſometimes will not allow the influence it deſerves, that I advanced the rule under conſideration; and it may not be improper to ſketch the limits within which this evidence appears to be unexceptionable.

The firſt thing to be conſidered, then, is the nature of the relation which ſolicits our belief; becauſe, if it be incredible, we need not go farther; we may reject the teſtimony without examination, becauſe we are more certain that what is incredible cannot be true, than we can be certain of the truth of any teſtimony. A relation is incredible two ways, either by containing an action in itſelf impracticable, or by containing circumſtances contradictory to one another. If, for inſtance, we were told, that an ordinary man bore a mountain on his back from Italy to France; or that there are men in the world who believe two and three make ſix; we would reject ſuch relations as unworthy of the leaſt credit, becauſe they contain actions and opinions which contradict all our conceptions and experience of human powers and faculties. If, again, a relation repreſent the performer of an action in different places at the ſame time, we refuſe credit, becauſe it involves a contradiction, and ſuppoſes the co-exiſtence of things which we know to be impoſſible. But if the action be practicable, if

the agent be adequate to the performance, and if the account be intelligible and confiftent, the next ftep is to examine the nature of the teftimony; and if that alfo be unexceptionable, the mind is prepared to believe, and it will be impatient if not permitted to beftow affent.

The circumftances of inquiry relative to the credibility of the teftimony, are, whether the relater was fully informed of the nature and particulars of the action; and whether he could be feduced by any temptation to mifreprefent them.

The article of full information may be fubdivided into feveral other inquiries; whether the action was an object of the fenfes of the relater; whether he had full time to examine it, and poffeffed the perfect ufe of his faculties at the time of examination; whether he examined the fame action, or fimilar actions, at different times, and always formed fimilar judgements; and, finally, whether his account is fupported, at leaft not contradicted, by other accounts of credit.

With regard to the character of the relater, we have reafon to rely on his veracity, if we have no caufe to doubt it; and if, at the fame time, marks of fincerity, attention, or difcernment appear, we cannot demand better foundation for affent. If an hiftorian be expofed to no temptation to falfify or mifreprefent, we fuppofe that he relates the truth; be-

caufe it is much more eafy to relate truth than to relate falfehood. Truth requires no anxious caution to preferve confiftency, no ftruggle to reprefs the remonftrances of confcience, which even the moft abandoned men cannot altogether filence. It follows the natural and confiftent train of caufes and effects. It prefents a credibility and authority which command conviction.

But if, befides a general attachment to truth, we difcover in an hiftorian other fymptoms of integrity, fuch as relating truth when it was his intereft to conceal or mifreprefent it, when it might hurt friends, gratify enemies, or expofe himfelf to danger from the refentment of thofe whom it might offend; we have the beft reafon to credit his teftimony; becaufe he difcovers not only great attachment to truth, but the ftrongeft averfion to falfehood, and evinces, that the temptations which induce men of little virtue to difguife truth, and thofe of no virtue to fupprefs it, do not affect him. He is at leaft fincere, and his teftimony muft be believed, unlefs it can be proved that he was mifinformed or miftaken.

If a relation be confiftent, the only ground for charging its author with miftake or mifinformation, is its contradiction of other accounts of credit, or its containing tranfactions of which we can explain neither the motives nor th manner. If two hiftorians contradict one another, which feldom hap-

pens, unless in cases of the most violent prevalence of party-spirit; the evidence of both will be destroyed, or the small portion of credit that remains will operate in favour of the more respectable author. If one author omit what is related by another, the omission may excite suspicion, but forms no direct argument against the credibility; because many circumstances unknown to us might occasion the oversight of which we complain.

Neither is the containing of transactions of which we cannot explain the motives or the manner, a good argument against the authenticity of a narrative; because the deficiency may be chargeable on the hearer or the reader, not on the relater. Men of all ages measure the motives, opinions, and actions of others, however different from themselves in constitution, or dissimilar in situation, by their own; and we need not be told, that nothing can be more fallacious than such a standard. A remarkable passage of history may be produced to illustrate this observation.

Herodotus, in travelling to collect materials for his history of Greece, received intelligence that some Phoenician seamen had embarked on the Red Sea, sailed round the south coast of Africa, and returned home by the Columns of Hercules, or the Straits of Gibraltar. In which voyage, they must have circumnavigated the Cape of Good Hope,

commonly accounted one of the moſt brilliant diſcoveries of modern enterpriſe. The hiſtorian ſubjoins his own opinion; that the incident was incredible, becauſe the voyagers reported, that in ſome part of their navigations, they had beheld the ecliptic, or the line of motion of the ſun, ſituated to the north of the zenith of their courſe. The hiſtorian, however, judged by a falſe ſtandard; he condemned as incredible what he did not underſtand; becauſe it was unknown, perhaps, in his time, that the appearance ſpecified actually takes place, in the navigation he had related. He reprobates the account, for a circumſtance which is the moſt plauſible characteriſtic of its authenticity; for it could hardly be ſuppoſed to have been conjectured unleſs it had been ſeen.

I have now offered every rule and obſervation, which appeared of importance to be attended to in forming our judgements in ſcience, arts, and buſineſs. I have unfolded the ſources of thoſe prejudices, which obſtruct the rectitude of our judgements; I have inculcated patience and attention in forming them, when we have full information; I have enjoined ſuſpence of judgement when information is wanting or deficient; I have recommended, finally, ſatisfaction with the beſt evidence that can be procured, and the propriety of judging and acting on that evidence. I know nothing more that can be done to render our judgements ſound

so n and logical, but that we carefully habituate ourselves to the practice of these rules. Without practice in this art, as in all others, performance will be aukward and imperfect; the rules will soon be forgotten, or will cease to have effect. They may become the subject of a little speculation, or conversation, perhaps; but will be of no service in the search of truth or in the conduct of life.

A man, ignorant of all rule, but habituated to candid and diligent exercise of his faculties, will decide more expeditiously and accurately, than one skilled in all the theory of reasoning, without the practice. No theory of any art can make an expert practitioner. Logic pretends not to make mechanical reasoners. All it does, all it can do, is to shew the way to find out truth, and to guide the exertions of our faculties in the pursuit of it. But if inquirers will neither travel in the road that leads to the temple of truth, nor employ their faculties to discriminate her when they have reached her sacred residence; if they will not attempt to obtain an acquaintance and intimacy with her, her handmaid Logic can furnish them no farther service. She must leave them to that ignorance and insignificance to which they seem consigned by nature; and must solace herself by lending aid to candidates, who will be more grateful f r her favours, and improve them to better advantage.

LECTURE VIII.

REASONING—MATHEMATICAL—MORAL—POLITICAL—PRUDENTIAL.

I HAVE difcuffed every topic introductory to the art of reafoning. I have explained the manner in which we receive ideas, the fources from which they are received, and the methods we muft employ to render them clear, adequate, and conclufive. I have explained the nature of the propofitions into which they may be formed, and the judgements which we muft pafs on thefe propofitions. I have, finally, delineated the prejudices which pervert our judgements; and I have attempted to eftablifh the rules we muft follow, if we expect to form them with accuracy and juftice. It remains only, to complete this department of the courfe, that I treat of reafoning, or the method of afcertaining propofitions, by means of intermediate

ideas, or proofs, whether demonſtrative or probable.

I formerly obſerved, that all knowledge is either intuitive, demonſtrative, or probable. The firſt, intuitive knowledge, is ſo extremely circumſcribed, that if man had no other method of comparing ideas, and extending information, though he might be wiſer than the beaſts of the field, or the fowls of the air, yet he would be ignorant of all ſcience and arts. All individuals and communities would be nearly in the ſame ſtate of improvement. The only difference among them would reſult from their quickneſs or ſagacity in perceiving ſelf-evident propoſitions.

As it is, then, the exerciſe of his reaſoning faculty by which man attains the moſt deciſive eminence in the creation, by which he aſcends far above the inferior animals, and by which different men and different communities are conſpicuouſly exalted above one another, in all thoſe acquiſitions which cultivate, civilize, adorn, and enlighten the mind of man; it is a matter of the moſt important concern, to examine what ſort of operation reaſoning is, how we ſhall perform it with moſt expedition and ſucceſs, and how we ſhall avoid thoſe errors by which many reaſoners in all ages have been led aſtray. To aſſiſt in this delicate and arduous undertaking is the object of the diſcuſſion on which I am now to enter.

Reafoning begins where intuition ends, and confifts in finding out the truth of a propofition, or the agreement or difagreement of its fubject and predicate, by the help of intermediate ideas. The intermediate ideas form the fteps, or links, by which the mind paffes from the firft of the primary ideas to the laft, or from the fubject of any propofition to its predicate; and finally perceives their relation. Reafoning affumes different names, according to the nature of the fteps, or of the links which difplay the relation between the primary ideas. If the mind attain complete fatisfaction in every ftep of its progrefs, or in the fucceffive comparifon of every pair of ideas, it is faid to acquire certainty of the agreement or difagreement of the two primary ideas; and the reafoning is called demonftrative.

If the agreement of the intermediate ideas with one another, and with the extremes, is not perfectly fatisfactory, that is, if the fteps of the reafoning leave the mind under fome degree of hefitation, the reafoning is denominated probable; and the reafoner attains probability only of the truth of the propofition he inveftigates. Where certainty terminates, probability commences; and the latter admits numerous degrees, from the higheft degree, which ftands next to certainty, to the loweft, which makes fo little impreffion, as to permit the mind to remain in a ftate of fufpence.

If a propofition, fupported by probable evidence, relate to fpeculation, the judgement formed, concerning it is often called opinion; if it relate to facts, chiefly fupported by teftimony, the judgement is generally called belief. In explaining, then, the branch of logic now before us, all we have to do, is to difcufs, firft, the nature of demonftrative reafoning; fecondly, that of probable reafoning; and to point out the fciences and arts in which they are refpectively employed. All reafoning is either of the one kind or the other; and in every fcience or art, in which conviction reaches not certainty, we muft be content with probability. After I have finifhed the explanation of legitimate reafoning, I fhall inveftigate the nature of fophiftry, and point out the chief methods by which mankind in all ages have impofed on themfelves, or mifled others. I fhall conclude the courfe with an account of the fyllogifm of Ariftotle, and a difcuffion of its merit as a mode of reafoning.

Mathematics and arithmetic, I muft again remark, are the only fciences fufceptible of demonftrative proof, which is fo fatisfactory and cogent as to exclude even the fuppofition of falfehood. Other fciences in their principles, may perhaps furnifh proofs nearly, if not completely demonftrative; but in the detail they exhibit nothing better than probability. The high evidence of the fciences of quantity, independent of the importance of the

truths they teach, renders them a good exemplification of the rules of logic; and one of the best methods of becoming a good reasoner, is to be familiar with the processes of investigation they supply.

To illustrate the nature of demonstrative reasoning, I shall analyze some propositions of the Elements of Euclid. Reasoning is a successive comparison of every pair of ideas, from the first to the last, or from the idea which forms the subject of the proposition, to the one which forms the predicate; and in demonstration every comparison is intuitively certain. When these ideas are found to agree, the demonstration is finished, and the reasoning is concluded. I begin with the first proposition of the first book of the Elements, which proposes "To describe an equilateral triangle on a given straight line." I pass over the operations by which the triangle in the figure is described, because I mean to analyze only the reasoning of the proposition.

After the figure is constructed on the given line, the proposition to be proved is, that "The triangle so constructed is equilateral, or has all its sides equal." The subject of the proposition, or the first idea of it, is that of the triangle described; the predicate of the proposition, or the second idea of it, is that of the equality of the sides of the triangle. Now, it is not intuitively certain that the three

sides are all equal to one another; therefore some intermediate ideas must be placed between the subject and the predicate of the proposition, to shew their agreement. The process consists of two steps, or one intermediate idea is necessary to prove the proposition. The first step is the comparison of the base * A. B. with one of the sides A. C.; and of their equality we have intuitive certainty, because, by the description of the figure, they are semi-diameters, or radii of the same circle. The second step is the comparison of the same side, or base, A. B. with the other side, B. C.; and of their equality, also, we have intuitive certainty, as they are both semi-diameters of another circle. This step finishes the demonstration. The base is found to agree with both the sides; and the triangle must be equilateral, because all the sides are equal; the subject and predicate of the proposition are found exactly to agree.

In the famous forty-seventh proposition of the first book of the Elements, the truth to be established is, "That in a right angled triangle, the square of the side opposite to the right angle is equal in quantity to the sum of the squares of the other sides." The square opposite to the right angle is the subject, the sum of the two other squares is the predicate, and the idea of the extent of the first square is to be compared with the idea of the sum of

* See the Figure in Simson's Euclid.

the other two ſquares. The proceſs is long and beautiful, and I ſhall point out the different ſteps.

The firſt ſtep is to prove, that * G. A. C. is one ſtraight line, and H. A. B. another, in order to lay a foundation for demonſtrating that the triangle F. B. C. is equal to half the ſquare F. A. and the triangle A. B. D. equal to half the parallelogram B. L.. The next ſtep is to prove the triangle A. B. D. equal to the triangle F. B. C. The third ſtep is to prove the triangle A. B. D. equal to half the parallelogram B. L. and the triangle F. B. C. equal to half the ſquare F. A.; and hence to infer the equality of the ſquare F. A. to the parallelogram B. L. Three ſimilar ſteps are neceſſary to find the ſquare A. K. equal to the parallelogram C. L.; and hence to infer the equality of the whole ſquare B. E. to the two ſquares, F. A. and A. K. which eſtabliſhes the agreement of the ſubject and predicate of the propoſition; or that the ſquare of the ſide oppoſite to the right angle, is equal to the ſquares of the two other ſides. To complete this proceſs, then, there are neceſſary theſe ſix capital ſteps, and each of theſe includes one or more ſubordinate ſteps, ſo that the ſum of the ſubordinate ſteps amounts to no fewer than twelve; and if theſe are added to the ſix capital ones, it appears, that to prove this propoſition, there are requiſite eighteen intermediate ideas.

* See the Figure.

The mind has a clear and diſtinct perception of the agreement of every pair of ideas; and the effect is proportional to the cauſe, it obtains the moſt complete certainty of the truth of the propoſition.

All reaſoning has this in common with demonſtration, that the agreement or diſagreement of the primary ideas muſt be proved by intermediate ideas; the difference is, that the agreement of the intermediate ideas with one another, and with their primary ideas, amounts not to certainty; it is no more than probable.

From this view it will appear, that the far greater part of knowledge, and even the moſt intereſting and important part, that which concerns morality, politics, the uſeful arts, and buſineſs, is not ſupported by better evidence than probability. The probability, however, in many caſes is highly convincing, approaches very near to certainty, and affords good ground for acting upon it with perfect confidence and ſatisfaction. It has often been wiſhed, and ſometimes aſſerted, that morality particularly might be fortified with the evidence of certainty; but there is much reaſon to apprehend that the undertaking would be unſucceſsful. The duties mankind owe to the Author of nature, to their fellow-creatures, and to themſelves, though palpable and obvious in their principles, yet when purſued through the ramifications in which they unfold themſelves, they deviate into relations where

the agreement of ideas is neither clear nor adequate.

That all men ſhould revere their Maker, and ſhould perform every duty they conceive will be acceptable to him; that they ſhould do good to their fellow-creatures, and ſhould not wantonly hurt or injure them; that they ſhould live in temperance and moderation, in order to inſure the higheſt happineſs their conſtitutions can enjoy; are all concluſions, of the juſtneſs of which nobody can doubt, any more, perhaps, than they can doubt that two and three make five, or that the three angles of a triangle are equal to two right angles. The agreement of the idea we have of man, with thoſe of his Creator, and his fellow-creature, infers theſe duties with an evidence which approaches very near, if it do not reach demonſtration. But when we deſcend to inveſtigate the nature of particular acts of regard to God, or of intercourſe with our fellow-creatures; our ſcale applies not accurately, the agreement or diſagreement of ideas is not perfectly clear; and we are not certain, at leaſt we do not agree, where regard to the Almighty terminates, and diſregard begins; where juſtice or charity ceaſes, and injuſtice or ſeverity commences. Till this can be done, we have no reaſon to expect that the precepts of morality ſhall be ſupported by the evidence of demonſtration.

The ſame ſpecies of reaſoning applies to the

evidence of other sciences, of arts, and of business. In them all, the mind discovers only moral certainty, that is, different degrees of probable evidence, according as the agreement of ideas is more or less clear and satisfactory. To illustrate these observations, I shall produce a few examples. Suppose some reasoning were employed to recommend the love of God, or to prove this proposition, that man ought to love God. The agreement of ideas in moral reasoning, I have formerly observed, relates to propriety, fitness, reasonableness. The meaning, then, of the proposition will be, whether the idea we have of such an imperfect dependent creature as man, agrees with the idea of his exerting love toward the great, wise, and good Being who made the universe, or whether it be fit, proper, and right that man should love God?

To prove this proposition, I might employ several intermediate ideas; I might first shew that the Almighty is the most amiable Being in the universe, and that he possesses all those attributes of goodness, wisdom, and power, most calculated to excite attachment. The amiableness of God would thus involve a large collection of particulars, or subordinate ideas, which altogether would constitute what, in the science of morals, is denominated an argument. I might prove, secondly, that the love of God is the surest means of happiness to ourselves. It will communicate self-approbation, con-

fidence in the wisdom of Providence, and the administration of human affairs; and will extirpate those anxieties and fears which haunt and distract weak and vicious men. The illustration of these topics also, would include a great number of subordinate ideas, and would constitute another argument for the love of God. I might farther insist that love to God is reasonable and proper, in return for the numerous instances of kindness, mercy, and love, he daily exerts towards us. The illustration of these instances, likewise, would comprehend many subordinate ideas, and would furnish a third argument in support of the proposition.

Suppose again, it were to be inferred from future punishment that men must be free agents, or that the idea of future punishment agrees with that of self-determination, or the freedom of action. The following train of intermediate ideas will shew that agreement. Future punishment must be inflicted by the Almighty; the Almighty can inflict no punishment not just; the punished of course must be guilty; they could, then, have done otherwise, and consequently must be free agents. This train of ideas, more shortly expressed, will stand thus: Future punishment—God the punisher—punishment just—punished guilty—could have done otherwise—self-determination. In this piece of reasoning there are four intermediate ideas, and five

comparisons are made to discover the agreement with the extremes, and with one another. The agreement between the adjacent ideas in every movement, appears with a high degree of conviction; and were each of the ideas illustrated at some length, according to the common mode of reasoning on moral topics, the whole would form an elegant deduction, and would communicate a very vivid impression.

Let us suppose farther, the following political proposition were proposed to be proved; and let us consider the nature of the reasoning requisite to establish it. "Industry is the capital source of national prosperity." The ideas, or terms, as the logicians express themselves, to be compared, are those of industry and national prosperity. I must also remark, that agreement of ideas in politics refers, not to reasonableness and fitness, as in morals, but to public utility, or national happiness. The meaning, then, of the proposition will be, that industry makes a nation prosperous, by extending its opulence, and exalting its reputation, in support of which I may argue in the following train: Industry increases the population of a country, by providing subsistence for additional inhabitants. An increase of inhabitants, increases commerce and manufactures. Commerce and manufactures procure riches from foreign nations of less industry. These riches

prompt a ſpirit of enterpriſe ſtill further to extend commerce and manufactures. Hence new nerves to domeſtic induſtry. The comforts, and many of the luxuries of life, are provided for all the members of the community. Ample ſecurity is found for the continuance of theſe advantages by the national reputation they procure, and the large reſources of money and men they ſupply to maintain it. But national proſperity conſiſts in theſe things which I have enumerated;—a wealthy, ſober, induſtrious, and numerous people, reſpectable at home, and formidable abroad. Each of the ſteps might have been illuſtrated at conſiderable length, and might have formed a very pleaſant and ſatisfactory diſcuſſion. They may alſo be condenſed into more narrow bounds, and may form the following ſeries ready for the neareſt compariſon. National induſtry—increaſe of people—improvements in commerce and manufactures—national riches—national enterpriſe—people at home, numerous and happy, reſpectable and formidable abroad—national proſperity. This ſeries preſents five intermediate ideas; and ſix compariſons are requiſite to afford conviction of the agreement of the firſt idea with the laſt, or of the ſubject of the propoſition with its predicate.

In the ſpecimens I have advanced from morals and politics, the evidence, you will obſerve, though highly ſatisfactory, is ſtill no more than probable;

and appears not with that commanding tone which compels assent. Sceptical men may find reason to suspend assent, and disputatious men may raise difficulties, which we are obliged to admit are not destitute of foundation. Accordingly, against every step of the preceding political series, some cause of hesitation may be started. It may be urged, that industry is not always attended with an increase of people; it may even sometimes produce the contrary effect; it may induce the people to emigrate to other countries, where their labour will be better rewarded than at home. It may be urged again, that the most warlike and powerful nations are often the poorest and most hardy, while arts and industry only supply riches to tempt such adventurers to seize both the country and its wealth. It may be contended, that arts and industry enervate mankind, multiply wants and vices, and render people miserable in the midst of every provision for happiness; that they repress all the great and splendid, and consequently many of the most pleasant exertions of the mind. It is the possibility of constructions of this sort, in all probable investigations, which diminishes their evidence, and renders the conviction they produce inferior to that of demonstration.

But however susceptible of controversy these specimens of reasoning may be, they are much more satisfactory than many of the conjectural

eſtimations on which men muſt every day act in ſome of the moſt important concerns of life. Many of the engagements we form, every new line of life on which we enter, involve numerous conſiderations to determine our conduct, which are ſcarcely ſupported by better evidence than ſpeculation. The wiſdom of the moſt prudent man is frequently not more meritorious than the ſagacity which leads him to conjecture with moſt probability, or which teaches him to proceed with recollection and attention to ſurrounding objects, ſo as to avail himſelf of events as they occur.

I mention theſe particulars to evince, that we have no good reaſon to be diſſatisfied with our condition, though we ſhould not receive, on many ſubjects of knowledge, other evidence for truth than that of probability. It is ſufficient to guide us to happineſs, while uncertainty about futurity, in particular is, perhaps, one of the moſt merciful diſpenſations with which the providence of Heaven could have favoured mankind. The higheſt happineſs we can partake in this world, is extremely circumſcribed. One of the chief ingredients of our enjoyments, is hope; and were our anticipations and conjectures about futurity leſs equivocal, our hopes would be correſpondently diminiſhed. In our deepeſt diſtreſs, our ignorance of what is to come is ſo great, as never to preclude hope. We ſometimes experience relief, contrary to every view of

probability, and every expectation; and we have always the consolation of looking forward, and hoping for better days.

In our reasonings of anticipation, we proceed chiefly by analogy. We suppose that the future will resemble the past. In the negotiations of business, and in forecasting the probable consequences of any plan of conduct, we must conclude, that similar causes will produce similar effects; that men will act in time to come as they have done in time past; and that the course of nature will proceed by the established rules which have directed it since the world began. We argue from the characters, the opinions, the interests, the passions, the weaknesses, and the caprices of men; and we endeavour to form systems of conduct for them, derived from the situations which they occupy. The trains of reasoning we adopt in such cases, are in a great measure hypothetical; and the probability of the evidence frequently is of the lowest kind. Conjectures often so counterbalance one another, as to leave the mind in a state of total suspence.

LECTURE IX.

SPECIES OF REASONING—SOPHISTRY.

IN the preceding lecture, I explained the nature of reafoning, and the different degrees of evidence it conveys to the mind, according as it is demonftrative or probable. I have fhewn that it confifts in perceiving whether ideas agree or difagree; and I have illuftrated the meaning of this agreement in mathematics, morals, politics, and bufinefs. It only remains, that I explain the different methods, in common ufe, of diftributing or arranging ideas in different proceffes of reafoning.

In this view, reafoning is faid to be either direct or indirect. In direct reafoning, we prove a propofition in the manner I have explained, by finding intermediate ideas that fhow the agreement of the terms of which it confifts. In indirect reafoning, we do not trace the agreement of the terms of a propofition; it takes place only when the predicate

of a proposition admits an alternative, and when either the predicate or the alternative must be true, or must agree with the subject of the proposition, because they exhaust every case that can exist. We prove that the alternative cannot be true; and therefore the predicate must be true. An example will make this matter perfectly clear.

Euclid lays down this proposition, "That a straight line drawn at right angles from the extremity of a diameter, falls without the circle." No intermediate idea, it seems, occurred, by which he could deduce the proof directly from the nature of the circle, or of the perpendicular or the extremity of the diameter. He proceeds, therefore, by indirect demonstration, and introduces an alternative. The perpendicular must fall either without the circle, or within it. No third supposition can be made, relative to the manner of its falling; for it cannot fall upon the circumference of the circle, except in one point. He proves that the alternative cannot be true, or that the perpendicular cannot fall within the circle. The predicate, then, must be true, that the perpendicular falls without the circle. Again, "The moon is either an opaque or a transparent body." It is not transparent, because, if it were, it would transmit the rays of the sun when it comes between the sun and the earth; and no eclipse of the sun could happen from the intervention of it

between the sun and the earth: But this conclusion is contrary to truth, for such eclipse does happen. The alternative, therefore, that the moon is a transparent body, must be false, and consequently the predicate must be true, that the moon is an opaque body. The refutation of the alternative is always pursued, till it terminates in some contradiction, falsehood, or absurdity; and on this account indirect reasoning is sometimes called "Reductio ad absurdum," by the logicians.

It has often been disputed, whether indirect reasoning is less elegant and satisfactory than direct; but I need not spend time in remarks on this controversy. Both convey truth with perfect evidence; and when a reasoner has got possession of an indirect proof, he will not, I believe, trouble himself much in searching for a direct one. It is, however, generally supposed, that mathematicians never employ the former but in cases of necessity, when they cannot have recourse to the latter. The great number of beautiful specimens of demonstration, of which their science is susceptible, may render them nice or delicate even about the elegance and manner of their reasonings; but on other subjects, and in other sciences, when the mind is glad to reach important truth on any terms, it will be abundantly satisfied with good indirect proof. It may, perhaps, be doubted whether the charge of inelegance is not the offspring of squeamishness and

caprice, rather than of juſt taſte. An indirect train of ideas is often long, and is conjoined with as much clearneſs and propriety as any direct one. The ſtep from the falſehood of the alternative to the truth of the predicate, is perfectly ſatisfactory, if not elegant; and it may be added, that indirect reaſoning imparts variety to the nature of the proof.

Reaſoning, farther, is ſaid to proceed either *a priori*, or *a posteriori*; a diſtinction which relates entirely to cauſe and effect. In reaſoning *a priori*, we begin with the cauſe, and infer from it the reality or the ſpecies of the effect. In reaſoning *a posteriori*, we reverſe this progreſs; we begin with the effect, and reaſon backward from it, to the eſtabliſhment of the exiſtence and qualities of the cauſe. If, for example, I maintain, that the ſoul of man is a thinking ſubſtance, and therefore that it is immaterial, becauſe matter cannot think; and hence again infer, that it is immortal, becauſe what is immaterial cannot die or be deſtroyed; I reaſon *a priori*; I deduce the effect from its cauſe, and prove the ſoul to be immortal from the nature of its conſtitution. If, again, I argue, that the people who live fifteen degrees farther eaſt than us, will have their day beginning and ending an hour ſooner than ours; that navigators, of courſe, who have ſailed fifteen degrees eaſtward will have loſt an hour of our day, and will have gained an hour

from the day of the people of that longitude; that these navigators will experience a similar loss, and gain in point of time, for every fifteen degrees eastward on the face of the globe; and that, as they must pass through four and twenty times fifteen degrees in sailing round the globe, so, on returning home, they will calculate time a day sooner than their countrymen, because they have lost twenty-four hours of the time of their countrymen, in their voyage. In this process, I reason *a priori*, because I deduce a curious fact, verified by experience from the figure of the earth, round which the navigation is performed.

In reasoning *a posteriori*, we argue from the effect to the cause, and conclude from the former the nature or existence of the latter. For example, from the wisdom, power, and goodness, discernible in all the works of nature, I infer, that there must be some wise, benevolent, and omnipotent cause, from which these effects proceed. I cannot doubt of the effects, because I experience them every moment of my existence; I can as little doubt that they must proceed from some cause, and that the cause must possess the qualities conspicuous in the effects. I observe, again, that the shadow of the earth projected on the face of the moon in a lunar eclipse, is of a circular form; and from this effect I justly infer, that the figure of the earth is

round, becaufe this figure only could produce fuch a fhadow.

Reafonings *a priori* are much circumfcribed, becaufe caufes are feldom fo well known as their effects. From effects, chiefly, we afcend to the knowledge of caufes; and on this account, reafoning *a posteriori* is much more frequent. It is much employed in inquiries into nature; it is the ground-work of the famous method of induction for inveftigating natural knowledge, recommended in the "Novum Organum" of Lord Bacon; and it is of frequent ufe in politics and morals. The beft way to obtain an acquaintance, both with the Author of nature, and with the fecondary caufes which produce the effects we daily behold, is to furvey with patience the effects themfelves, becaufe we have no means of information concerning the caufes, except in this channel. In like manner, to underftand the duties a man owes to his country, or to his neighbour, we muft fcrutinize his conftitution, what forms the happinefs of fuch a being, both as a member of fociety, and a moral agent; what are his mental faculties, and his bodily powers; his attachments, and antipathies; his gratifications, and his wants. In all thefe inquiries we begin from the effect, and afcend to the caufe, or we reafon *a posteriori*.

The laft diftinction of reafoning, divides it into analytic and fynthetic, and refers chiefly to mathe-

matical reasonings. Analysis forms an elegant method of investigating the legitimacy of demonstrations. Synthesis puts together the different steps after investigation, so as to make out a proof. Analysis begins with the predicate of a proposition, and ascends from it to the subject. Synthesis takes the opposite course, begins with the subject, and descends from it to the predicate, or it is the same thing with direct reasoning. The ancients carried on analysis by means of mathematical figures; the great instrument of it in modern times is algebra. Many examples of the ancient analysis are to be found in Apollonius Pergæus, De Sectione Rationis, and in the Problems published by the late Dr Steuart of Edinburgh. Every treatise of algebra, but particularly that of Sir Isaac Newton, will furnish specimens of the modern analysis by letters or symbols. All the demonstrations of the Elements of Euclid exhibit examples of synthesis; and I need not produce any of them. I shall, therefore, offer only one example of analysis. The purpose of it is to try the legitimacy of an investigation, or to discover whether the intermediate ideas, by which a mathematician suspects a demonstration may be accomplished, are sufficient for that purpose. He begins with supposing, that the ideas are good media for demonstrating the proposition in question, and constructs his figure on that hypothesis. He supposes, farther, the thing done that

a problem requires, or the truth established which a theorem proposes to prove. He sets out from the proposition, and reasons backward to the beginning of it; and if he encounter no contradiction, or terminate in no absurdity, he concludes the media to be pertinent and legitimate; if he land in an absurdity or contradiction, he infers, that the media are improper, and that the synthetical demonstration will be inconclusive.

If, for example, it were required to analyze the first proposition of the first book of the Elements of Euclid, which proposes to describe an equilateral triangle on a given straight line. The mathematician would describe a triangle on the given line, and would suppose it equilateral. He would reason thus: If the triangle be equilateral, then making one end of the base a centre, and describing a circle with the length of it as a radius, the circle will pass through the other extremities of the base, and of one of the sides; so that the base and one of the sides must become radii of the same circle. If another circle be described from the other end of the base, with the same base taken as a radius, this circle will pass through the other extremities of the base and of the other side. The two circles, therefore, are equal, because their radii are so. This step finishes the analysis, and proves the media to be legitimate, because the reasoning backward has reached its principle, the equality of the two

circles, from which the synthesis begins, or from which the truth of the proposition, that the triangle is equilateral, is demonstrated.

Logicians mention some other distinctions of reasoning, which I shall shortly explain, because they sometimes occur in conversation, and often in books. When we argue from principles, or opinions, admitted by the person with whom we reason, whether they be true or not in themselves, we are said to employ an *argumentum ad hominem*. When we urge in our defence some eminent authority, which an antagonist is ashamed to oppose, we are said to employ an *argumentum ad verecundiam*. When we perplex or puzzle an adversary, we offer what is called *argumentum ad ignorantiam*.

Logicians have divided sophistry also into different kinds; the most remarkable of which it will be proper to specify, because they are very common. The first is called *Ignoratio Elenchi*, and consists in mistaking or misrepresenting the state of the question under discussion. This species occurs in most controversies, but particularly in political ones, which now chiefly engage men of learning and ability. Religious and philosophical controversies have, fortunately for the peace of society, almost totally disappeared. The moment a writer engages in controversy, in spite of all the attention he can maintain, partialities lay hold of his mind; his passions warp and mislead his understanding.

He reads the performances of his antagonist under the influence of dispositions which induce him to mistake their meaning. He discovers malevolent or insidious designs, which are perceptible by nobody but himself; and he imputes principles and views to his opponent, which the latter never entertained, or disavows. He introduces principles and views of his own, and he reasons and speculates about them as if they were admitted by the opposite party.

Another species of sophistry is called *Petitio Principii*, and consists in assuming as true the proposition under debate. This species is not very frequent in business, because few men are so void of discernment, or so destitute of delicacy and regard to truth, as confidently to maintain what they have not attempted to prove. It is not, however, unfrequent in philosophical and political investigations, in which, either on account of the intricacy or uncertainty of the subjects, disputants arrogate more liberty of obtruding their opinions upon their antagonists, or presume more readily that a bold assertion may be admitted for a proof.

The Peripatetics pretended to prove, that the centre of the earth is the centre of the universe, by the following manifest *petitio principii*. "All bodies must move towards the centre of the universe, but we find from experience, that all bodies move towards the centre of the earth; therefore the

centre of the earth is the centre of the univerfe." This argument proves nothing; for although we allow that all bodies with which we are acquainted, move towards the centre of the earth, yet it does not follow that all bodies in the univerfe move towards the centre of the earth. The truth is, that a body near the furface of the earth, moves towards it only by the difference of attraction it exerts, above the other great bodies in nature; that all the bodies in the folar fyftem are attracted towards a point near the furface of the fun; and that all the bodies of our folar fyftem, and perhaps of all the fyftems of the univerfe, are attracted towards fome other point, furely not the centre of the earth, which is the centre of the whole.

Sophiftry, again, frequently appears in arguing from one particular to another, or in inferring general conclufions from particular cafes. The logicians call it a "dicto fecundum quid, ad dictum fimpliciter." The argument of the Epicureans of old, to prove the gods of human fhape, affords a pertinent example of this fort of fophiftry. They maintained, that the human was the moft beautiful form of all thofe with which men were acquainted, or of which they had any conception, but the moft beautiful form is always fuppofed to belong to the gods, the beft of beings in the univerfe; it was, therefore, reafonable to conclude, that they were endued with the human form. No connection

subsists between the nature of man and that of the gods, to induce us to believe the latter must possess the shape of the former; and we cannot infer, because the figure of man is the most beautiful we are acquainted with, that therefore the form of the gods, admitting them to have some form, cannot be more beautiful than the human. The argument, that the form of a pine-apple, being the most beautiful, perhaps, of vegetable forms, is also the form of the gods, would be equally conclusive. It would be an inference from one particular to another, between which there is no relation; or which have nothing in common, whence such an inference can be deduced.

Should I, again, conclude, from the foolish or iniquitous behaviour of some individuals, of a numerous order of men, that all the order are fools or rogues; or, from the unwholesomeness or bad taste of some sort of animal and vegetable food, that all sorts are unwholesome or unpleasant; or, because many bad kings and magistrates have been in the world, that all kings and magistrates are bad men; I argue from premises insufficient to support my inference, because I extend the latter much farther than the former, and suppose there are no exceptions, where there may be thousands. This illegitimate and illiberal logic frequently appears in the intercourse of society, when all

the connections, the family, the friends, the order of an impudent or a criminal perſon, are branded with the improprieties and the errors of which he only has been guilty; while they entertain, perhaps, a more lively diſapprobation of his conduct than thoſe who load them with reproach. It is, indeed, difficult to decide whether ſuch a ſpirit is more characteriſtic of cruelty, or want of candour. It is cruel, for it diſplays a ſtrong diſpoſition to criminate the innocent; and to pour into a delicate and honourable mind, that pungent vexation which reſults from the loſs of reputation, under a conſciouſneſs of having done nothing to deſerve ſuch a misfortune. It is void of candour; becauſe no intercourſe has ſubſiſted between the culprit and the party accuſed, which can authoriſe any inference of blame from the one to the other; and it is not a little uncandid to deduce an inference, without or contrary to premiſes.

Many errors and much falſe reaſoning reſult from forming hypotheſes, to account for the phenomena of nature, or the actions of men, without endeavouring to inveſtigate the true cauſes and motives from the effects. This ſpecies of ſophiſtry the logicians call *Causam assignare quæ causa non est.* Philoſophers and ſpeculative politicians have been moſt prone to indulge in this kind of ratiocination, and many curious examples of it are to be found in phyſical books, and in real life. Before the illuſ-

trious reformation of philofophy introduced by Lord Bacon, and profecuted fince his time by modern philofophers, particularly by Sir Ifaac Newton, the whole fcience of nature was occupied about hypothefes. A philofopher never looked out to obtain knowledge of the effects and operations actually exifting, till he had formed in his clofet fome theory concerning them; and then he proceeded to twift and to violate every appearance, till it fhould accord with the fpeculation he had thought proper to adopt. One of the moft prolific of thefe theories was the abhorrence which philofophers fuppofed nature entertained againft a vacuum. Prompted by the exceffive obftinacy of this difpofition, fhe made the moft ftrenuous efforts, to replenifh every vacuity, which the ordinary operations of caufes, or the artifices of men, might attempt to impofe upon her. Hence a bottle, out of which the air had been extracted, was broken to pieces, not by the weight of the external air, its true caufe, but by the abhorrence nature entertained of a vacuum. Water afcended in a pump, not from the preffure of the atmofphere, but from the fame abhorrence of a vacuum.

All the heavenly bodies, fays Ariftotle, in his Phyfics, muft move in circles, becaufe a circle is the moft perfect of all figures, and becaufe bodies moving in fuch figures meet with leaft refiftance.

We would have been much obliged to him, had he told us, how he knew that the circle is the most perfect of all figures, and that bodies moving in circles meet with least resistance; but both these reasons are mere suppositions, contrary to truth, as well as the opinion that the heavenly bodies move in circles, which he might have found to be erroneous by a little observation. The same philosopher offers the following singular ratiocination, to support the hypothesis he had adopted, concerning the eternity and perfection of the world. "The world is a perfect production, because it is composed of bodies; and bodies are perfect magnitudes, because they consist of three dimensions, length, breadth, and thickness, and cannot admit of more. Lines are not perfect magnitudes, because they have length only, which may easily be made to move into a surface. Surfaces are not perfect magnitudes, because they have only length and breadth, which may easily be made to move into a solid."

All this reasoning is mere conjecture, and relates to the qualities only of magnitudes, not in the least to their merits. The ocult qualities of the same author, and his followers, are not more satisfactory sources of natural knowledge. The pulse beats; the loadstone points to the pole; tartar is emetic; poppy produces sleep; because there is a beating quality in the pulse, an attractive qua-

lity in the loadſtone, an emetic quality in tartar, and a ſoporific quality in poppy. Such philoſophizing reſembles the play of children, or the ridicule of empyrics, rather than the ſerious inveſtigations of grave inquirers. It furniſhes an humiliating picture of the progreſs of natural philoſophy among the ancients, when ſuch reaſoning could be committed to writing, or could find any readers and admirers.

Some apology, however, may be offered for the ancients, becauſe they had not a Bacon to point out the genuine ſources of natural knowledge, and to guide their ſteps in the inveſtigation of it; but what excuſe ſhall we offer for Des Cartes, who, after the days of Bacon, after conſiderable progreſs had been made by Kepler and Copernicus, in diſcovering the true theory of the ſolar ſyſtem, pretended to impoſe on the world a whimſical hypotheſis, the reſult of the moſt romantic imagination in philoſophy, deſtitute of all foundation in experience, and contradictory to the greater part of the phenomena. It is ſtill more aſtoniſhing, that ſuch a ſyſtem ſhould have found abettors; and that the philoſophy of Newton ſhould have had to ſtruggle hard for a conſiderable time, before it could obtain a complete victory.

To account, then, for the motions of the heavenly bodies, Des Cartes filled the ſolar ſyſtem with ſpherical vortices, or circular currents of fluid mat-

ter, by which he ſuppoſed the primary planets were carried in ſtreams round the ſun, and the ſecondary planets in ſimilar ſtreams round their primaries. But may we not aſk a thouſand unanſwerable queſtions with reſpect to this wild theory? Is the ſpecific gravity of the matter, which compoſes theſe vortices, greater than that of the planets it ſupports and carries along, while no glaſſes have rendered it viſible? Whence is it ſupplied, what makes it move, or has it any thing in common with any known fluid? What produces the coheſion of its parts, or how are the particles of one vortex prevented from interference with the particles of other vortices, even when they interſect one another? If all be reſolved into the power of Omnipotence, the cauſes of whoſe operations are inexplicable or unknown, what need was there for vortices as a ſecondary cauſe? The only conceivable uſe of them is to carry on the motions of the heavenly bodies; and it was ſurely as eaſy for Omnipotence to accompliſh that purpoſe without them as with them. They ſeem not ſuperior, in reſpect of ingenuity, as a philoſophical cauſe, to the contrivance of the Indian ſcioliſt, who introduced the back of a tortoiſe to ſupport the elephant which ſupported the globe of the earth.

The laſt ſpecies of ſophiſtry is reaſoning in a circle; or the aſſuming of one propoſition to prove another, and then reſting the proof of the firſt on

the evidence of the ſecond. The writers of the church of Rome are often accuſed of committing ſuch blunders. They firſt prove the divine authority of their church from the holy ſcriptures, and then they employ the infallability of the Pope to confirm their interpretation of the ſcriptures. They eſtabliſh the infallibility of the Pope by the teſtimony of the ſenſes, and they employ the ſame infallibility to deſtroy the teſtimony of the ſenſes, when theſe remonſtrate againſt the credibility of the doctrine of tranſubſtantiation.

LECTURE X.

SYLLOGISM.

IN explaining the nature of reafoning, I have not pretended to teach any art regarding the inveftigation of truth and knowledge, except careful attention to attain clear ideas, and patient comparifon of thefe ideas. I know no other art, nor do I know any ufeful and fuccefsful inquirer who has employed any other. From the days of Ariftotle, however, to the revival of letters, fomewhat more than two centuries ago, all learned men, almoft, imagined they poffeffed fuch an art, and many ftill hold the fyllogiftic method of that eminent ancient, to be what they call an analyfis of the art of reafoning, though they admit that it cannot eafily be employed to any ufeful purpofe in philofophy or bufinefs.

The hiſtory of learning has not to exhibit another ſuch ſingular and curious phænomenon, as the progreſs and the influence of the logic of Ariſtotle. It was delineated almoſt as fully in the writings of that author, as it has been in the numerous and more voluminous compoſitions of his followers. If we except the addition of examples, of the different figures and modes of ſyllogiſms, little important improvement has been added to the reſearches and explanations of the inventor.

In all Ariſtotle's writings there is ſome obſcurity. He either had not, or would not exert, the faculty of explaining his meaning ſimply and intelligibly. His expreſſion is often equivocal and abrupt. His mode of thinking is abſtract and refined; and his affectation of ſyſtem is ſo great, that he multiplies diviſions and ſubdiviſions without end. He exhauſts the patience, and puzzles the attention of the moſt partial, and the moſt intelligent of his readers. Of all his numerous treatiſes, however, his logic is perhaps the moſt obſcure, owing partly to the intricate nature of the topics it treats, but chiefly to the exceedingly involved manner in which he has diſcuſſed them. The obſcurity and the ingenuity of the works of Ariſtotle contributed, perhaps, to eſtabliſh his authority during the darkneſs of the middle ages. The admiration of ignorant men is often the ſureſt ſupport of their attachment; and the beſt method of attaining that

admiration, is to aſtoniſh them with the diſcuſſion of myſteries which they do not underſtand. Whether we ſhall allow this theory to be ſatisfactory or not, the fact is certain, that no doctrines of any other philoſopher ever acquired ſuch abſolute dominion over the minds of men.

The works of the Stagirite, by a ſeries of events a little ſingular, remained in a great meaſure unknown for many years after his death. He had left them to Theophraſtus, who ſucceeded him in the Peripatetic ſchool. Theophraſtus tranſmitted them to Neleus, his heir, who, after ſelling a copy of them to Ptolemy Philadelphus, king of Egypt, conveyed them to Scepſis, a city of Troas, his native country, where they were depoſited in a vault, for fear, it ſeems, they ſhould fall into the hands of the king of Pergamus, to whom that country belonged, and who, it is probable, wiſhed to appropriate them at a price much below their value.

In this vault they remained near a hundred and thirty years, till they were rendered almoſt illegible by dampneſs and vermin. They were, however, reſcued from deſtruction, and were ſold, or conveyed to Apellicon, a Peripatetic philoſopher of Athens, who cauſed them to be tranſcribed, and depoſited in his library. There they remained, till Sylla, at the head of a Roman army, in the Mythridatic war, conquered Athens, when he got poſſeſſion of the library of Apellicon, and tranſ-

mitted it to Rome. Tyrannion, a Greek grammarian, an acquaintance of Cicero and Atticus, who refided at Rome, obtained a copy of them by the good offices of the library-keeper of Sylla*. This critic was at much pains to get them tranfcribed and corrected; and from his copy, chiefly, the Romans feem to have received their knowledge of the Peripatetic philofophy.

From the copy of the works of Ariftotle, purchafed by the king of Egypt, the Arabians probably firft derived their acquaintance with him; but the knowledge of his works in Italy appears to have been extinguifhed by the inundations of German barbarians, who fubverted the Roman dominion in the fifth century. It is at leaft certain, that no part of his works was much read or admired in Europe, till the middle of the eleventh century; and that the knowledge of them then acquired, was chiefly obtained from the Arabians. The logic of Ariftotle, in particular, was formed for cavilling and difputation; and it foon gained applaufe and authority, when the fchoolmen, the moft fubtle and difputatious order of men the world ever faw, began to attract the notice of fociety.

Lanfranc, Archbifhop of Canterbury, is commonly reputed the father of this order; and he was the firft who drew the attention of the public to the works of the Stagirite. All learned men

of Europe ſoon became logicians and Ariſtotelians. Schools were erected, colleges were endowed, literary degrees were conferred. In many cathedrals, and in moſt monaſteries, academical inſtitutions were eſtabliſhed; and the whole knowledge then in vogue, was to form ſyllogiſms with readineſs and addreſs, to perplex, confound, and conquer an adverſary. Formal and public diſputations were frequently held among the members of theſe ſocieties, and ſociety ſometimes challenged ſociety to wage keen ſyllogiſtic war againſt one another. Logical champions travelled about, like knight-errants, in queſt of literary adventures, and entered the liſts with whatever combatant would venture to take up their gauntlet of defiance. Victory crowned a diſputant with the higheſt applauſe, and commonly procured him ſome appellation ſignificant of the eminence of his ſyllogiſtic powers; ſuch as, Doctor Profundus, Subtilis, Irrefragabilis. Never was the zeal of men ſo great for the cultivation of uſeful knowledge, as was the ambition of the ſchoolmen to become adepts in the art of diſputation, and to ſilence an antagoniſt whom they expected not to convince.

In ſuch an age, and with ſuch men, the logic of Ariſtotle could not fail to be received with avidity. His authority became ſupreme and indiſputable. It was the moſt inſufferable impudence to controvert his opinions, or even to inſinuate ſuſpicion of

error. The ſacred writings claimed not greater reverence than the works of this philoſopher, and his name was little leſs reſpected than that of Jeſus Chriſt. He was denominated *divine;* large treatiſes were written to prove the ſalvation of his ſoul; he was conſidered as the beſt guardian of the Chriſtian faith; and, in ſeveral churches in Germany, his morals were read to the people in place of the goſpels. Through the whole almoſt of the ſcholaſtic period, which continued above five hundred years, from the middle of the eleventh century to the middle of the ſixteenth, did the authority of Ariſtotle remain uncontroulable over the minds of men, and did eminence in the ſyllogiſtic art procure the greateſt fame, and the higheſt honours.

But the influence of the opinions of Ariſtotle was not confined to the ſchools of diſputation; the civil power ſometimes ſupported their authority; and men of more erudition, and of more poliſhed times, than the ſchoolmen, teſtified their approbation in terms of the ſtrongeſt applauſe. An æra ſo late as the end of the ſixteenth century, ſupplies a remarkable incident to illuſtrate this obſervation.

Petrus Ramus, a lecturer in the college of Navarre, publiſhed a theſis to obtain the degree of Maſter of Arts, in which he ventured to controvert ſome of the tenets, and to cenſure the logic of this philoſopher. The affair quickly made a great

noife. France was alarmed, and the univerfity of Paris took the matter under their cognizance. They refented fo highly the conduct of Ramus, that they would not be content with academical cenfures. They firft profecuted him before the parliament of Paris, that fome civil punifhment might be inflicted fuitable to the enormity of the herefy of which he had been guilty, and which, they maintained, fapped the foundations of religion. Sufpicious, however, that the parliament might not canvafs the matter with the fame zeal and partiality which animated themfelves, they next employed every intrigue to remove the difcuffion from the parliament to the king and council.

Francis the Firft entered fully into the views of the univerfity. He appointed judges to try the merit of the difpute; he approved their decifion, and he publifhed a royal mandate enjoining the obfervation of it. The fentence is a curious literary monument, and marks the high afcendancy which the writings of Ariftotle ftill preferved over the minds of their readers. It declared Ramus guilty of rafhnefs, impudence, arrogance, and ignorance; that his thefis was a malicious attack on the logic of Ariftotle, which all the world admired, and which he did not underftand; that the publication of it fhould be fuppreffed for the peace of fociety, and the intereft of truth; and that no perfon whatever fhould tranfcribe, print, difperfe,

or read it, under pain of the severest punishment.

The purpose of the logic of Aristotle, and of the numerous writers on the same subject who have appeared since his time, is to teach us to reason by syllogism. What, then, is this wonderful syllogism with which mankind have been so long, and so deeply fascinated, and which they deemed the handmaid of truth, and the bulwark of religion? Is there any charm in the name? Will it make us mechanical reasoners, without the necessity of using our faculties? Can it shew any other channel to truth and knowledge, than that which all men in earnest employ, and which consists in the comparison of our ideas, in order to discover their agreement or disagreement? To answer these questions in a satisfactory manner, I must explain the manner of its formation, and unfold the ingredients of which it consists.

A syllogism is an argument, or a step of an argument, containing three propositions, the first called the major, the second the minor, and the third the conclusion. For example,

> All animals are mortal;
> Man is an animal;
> Therefore, man is mortal.

Each proposition possesses quantity and quality.

By quantity is meant, that it is univerſal or particular; by quality, that it is an affirmative, or negative. An univerſal propoſition, as was formerly explained, includes a whole genus, or a whole ſpecies, and affirms or denies ſomething of them. The major propoſition of the ſyllogiſm now adduced is an example. "All animals are mortal," is an univerſal affirmative propoſition. Mortality is affirmed of the whole genus of animals. "No animal can live without food," is an univerſal negative propoſition. A particular propoſition includes only a part of a genus, or of a ſpecies, and affirms or denies ſomething of it. Accordingly, "Some animals are long lived," is a particular affirmative propoſition. "Some animals are not endowed with reaſon," is a particular negative propoſition. Hence it appears that four ſorts of propoſitions only can enter a ſyllogiſm. They muſt be either univerſal affirmatives, or univerſal negatives; particular affirmatives, or particular negatives. Theſe four ſorts of propoſitions, for the convenience of diſtinguiſhing them, are denominated by the four following vowels, *a*, *e*, *i*, *o*. *A*, ſignifies univerſal affirmative; *e*, univerſal negative; *i*, particular affirmative; and *o*, particular negative. To aſſiſt the memory, theſe vowels and their properties are formed into the two following monkiſh verſes:

"Asserit *e* negat *a*, sed universaliter ambæ.
Asserit *i* negat *o*, sed particulariter ambo."

Although a syllogism consists of three propositions, it contains only three ideas, which are called terms, each of which is twice repeated, to make up the propositions. One of these ideas, which is always the predicate of the conclusion, is called the major term; another the minor term, which is always the subject of the conclusion; and the third, the middle term. The reasoning of the syllogism lies in pointing out the agreement or disagreement of the major and minor terms, by comparing them with the middle term. The middle term never appears in the conclusion, or third proposition; it is compared successively with the major and minor terms in the two first propositions, or premises, as they are sometimes called. It is twice repeated in the premises; it may be either the predicate of the major premise, and the subject of the minor; or, it may be the subject of the major premise, and predicate of the minor. In like manner, both the major and minor terms stand once in each premise, and they are both repeated in the conclusion.

For example, in the syllogism formerly quoted, the minor term is man, the major term is mortal, and the middle term is animal. In the

first premise, "all animals are mortal," the middle term, animal, is compared with the major term, mortal. Animal is the subject; mortal is the predicate; and it is affirmed or predicated of all animals, that they are mortal. In the second premise, "man is an animal," man, the minor term, is compared with animal, the middle term; and it is affirmed, or predicated of man, that he is an animal. The middle term, animal, is the subject of the former premise, and the predicate of the latter. In the conclusion, "man is mortal," the minor term, man, is inferred to agree with the major term, mortal, because, in the premises, they were both found to agree with the same middle term, animal.

We have now advanced a considerable way in the explanation of the nature of a syllogism. In order to complete the illustration of all those which are denominated regular, or categorical syllogisms, it will be necessary only to unfold the meaning of mode and figure. Figure relates to the position of the middle term; mode to the quantity and quality of the propositions of which the syllogism consists. The middle term may be the subject of the major premise, and the predicate of the minor, when the syllogism is of the first figure; or, it may be the predicate of both premises, which makes a syllogism of the second figure; or, it may be the subject of both premises, when the syllogism will be of the third figure; or, it may be the predicate of the

major premiſe, and the ſubject of the minor, when the ſyllogiſm will be of the fourth figure. As the middle term never appears in the concluſion, and muſt appear twice in the premiſes, it will appear, that theſe four are all the poſitions of which it is ſuſceptible; and conſequently that the number of figures muſt alſo be four. I ſhould add examples of each figure, but I rather chooſe to defer them till I have explained the meaning of mode, when the ſame examples will ſerve to illuſtrate both figures and modes.

I have already remarked, that all ſyllogiſms are compoſed of four ſorts of propoſitions; univerſal affirmatives, or univerſal negatives; particular affirmatives, or particular negatives; and that theſe propoſitions are diſcriminated by the vowels *a*, *e*, *i*, *o*. The mode of a ſyllogiſm is determined by the ſpecies of the propoſitions of which it is compoſed. They may be three univerſal affirmatives marked by three *a*'s, or three univerſal negatives marked by three *e*'s, or three particular affirmatives marked by three *i*'s, or three particular negatives marked by three *o*'s; or, they may be two univerſal affirmatives, and one univerſal negative, marked by two *a*'s and one *e*; or two univerſal affirmatives, and one particular affirmative, marked by two *a*'s and one *i*; or two univerſal affirmatives, and one particular negative, marked by two *a*'s and one *o*. Each of theſe combinations

makes a mode; and there may be as many modes in each figure, as there are poſſible combinations of the four vowels. It is found, by computation, that the number of poſſible combinations is no fewer than ſixty-four for each figure, ſo that all the four figures will furniſh two hundred and fifty-ſix modes.

But of theſe poſſible modes, a few only form legitimate ſyllogiſms. The firſt figure has no more than four concluſive modes; one conſiſting of three univerſal propoſitions, denoted by three *a*'s, to which has been given, by the ſchoolmen, the name of *Barbara*, becauſe it contains the vowel *a* three times. A ſecond, conſiſting of an univerſal negative major propoſition, an univerſal affirmative minor propoſition, and an univerſal negative concluſion, denoted by the vowels *e*, *a*, *e*, to which has been given the name of *Celarent*, becauſe the vowels of this mode form the vowels of that word. A third, containing an univerſal affirmative major propoſition, a particular affirmative minor propoſition, and a particular affirmative concluſion, denoted by the letters *a*, *i*, *i*, out of which is formed the word *Darii*, for the name of this mode. A fourth, conſiſting of an univerſal negative major premiſe, and a particular affirmative minor premiſe, and a particular negative concluſion, marked by the vowels *e*, *i*, *o*, of which has been formed the word *Ferio*, for the name of the laſt mode.

In the ſecond figure are found alſo four concluſive modes; and the quantity and quality of their proportions will be readily comprehended from their names, in which, as in the preceding figure, the vowels only are ſignificant. *Cesare* is the name of the firſt mode; *Camestres*, of the ſecond; *Festino*, of the third; *Baroco*, of the fourth. The third figure has ſix modes, denoted by the hard words, *Darapti*, *Felapton*, *Disamis*, *Datisi*, *Bocardo*, *Ferison*. Hence it appears, that all the legitimate modes of the three firſt figures are no more than fourteen. The names of theſe modes and figures were, to aid the memory, formed by the ſchoolmen into the following barbarous hexameters:

"Barbara, Celarent, Darii, Ferio, dato primæ;
Ceſare, Cameſtres, Feſtino, Baroco, ſecundæ;
Tertia grande ſonans recitat Darapti, Felapton;
Adjungens Diſamis, Datiſi, Bocardo, Feriſon."

Ariſtotle has not treated ſeparately of the modes of the fourth figure, becauſe he found they could be reduced to thoſe of the former figures. I ſhall now offer ſome examples to illuſtrate the theories which I have endeavoured to explain. The following is a ſyllogiſm of the firſt figure, and of the mode *Barbara*:

All bad men are miserable;
All tyrants are bad men;
Therefore, all tyrants are miserable.

The major term is "miserable," the minor term is "tyrants," and the middle term is "bad men." The middle term is the subject of the major premise, "all bad men are miserable," and the predicate of the minor premise, "all tyrants are bad men." The syllogism is therefore of the first figure, which requires these positions of the middle term. The propositions are all universal affirmatives; consequently, the mode is *Barbara*.

The next shall be an example of the second figure, and of the mode *Cesare*.

No deceitful man merits confidence;
All honest men merit confidence;
Therefore, no honest man is deceitful.

"Deceitful," is the major term; "honest man," is the minor term; and "merits confidence," is the middle term. The middle term is the predicate of both the premises, "no deceitful man merits confidence," "all honest men merit confidence," which are the situations of the middle term required by the second figure. The first premise is universal negative, marked by the letter *e*, "no deceitful man merits confidence;" the second uni-

verſal affirmative marked by the letter *a*, "all honeſt men merit confidence;" the concluſion univerſal negative, marked again by the letter *e*, "no honeſt man is deceitful." Theſe letters conſtitute the mode *Ceſare*.

The ſubſequent ſyllogiſm is of the third figure, and of the mode *Darapti*. It is one of Keckerman's examples.

All good men are happy;
All good men hate the devil;
Therefore, ſome men who hate the devil are happy.

The major term is, "happy;" the minor term is, "hate the devil;" and the middle term is, "good men." The middle term is the ſubject of both premiſes, "all good men are happy," "all good men hate the devil," which conſtitutes a ſyllogiſm of the third figure. The major premiſe, "all good men are happy," is an univerſal affirmative; the minor premiſe, "all good men hate the devil," is the ſame; the concluſion, "ſome men who hate the devil are happy," is a particular affirmative. The two premiſes are noted by the two *a*'s, the concluſion by *i*, and theſe letters form the mode *Darapti*.

I have now produced an example of a mode of each figure. It would be tedious to exemplify all

the modes; but to prevent ſuſpicion of unfair procedure, I ſhall add a few inſtances promiſcuouſly, from the different figures and modes, in order to illuſtrate further the nature of this famous inſtrument of reaſoning, and to lay a foundation for the remarks I have to offer upon it. The following ſyllogiſm is of the mode *Bocardo*, which belongs to the third figure. The name ſhews, that the firſt premiſe, *o*, muſt be a particular negative; the ſecond premiſe, *a*, an univerſal affirmative; and the concluſion, *o*, a particular negative. The third figure requires the middle term to be the ſubject of both premiſes; all theſe requiſites are thus fulfilled.

Some good men are not rich;
All good men are happy;
Therefore ſome happy men are not rich men.

The next example is of *Camestres*, a mode of the ſecond figure. It is another of Keckerman's,

All men are animals;
No ſtone is an animal;
Therefore, no ſtone is a man.

"Animal," is the middle term, and is the predicate of both premiſes, as required by the ſecond figure. The firſt premiſe is *a*, univerſal affirmative; the

ſecond, *e*, univerſal negative; the concluſion, *e*, alſo univerſal negative. Hence the mode *Camestres*.

The mode *Darii* ſhall furniſh another example.

Every thing baſe ſhould be avoided;
Some pleaſures are baſe;
Therefore, ſome pleaſures ſhould be avoided.

"Avoided," is the major term; "pleaſures," the minor term; "baſe," the middle term. Baſe, is the ſubject of the major premiſe, and the predicate of the minor, which refers the ſyllogiſm to the firſt figure. The firſt premiſe marked, *a*, is univerſal affirmative; the ſecond premiſe and the concluſion are marked, *i*, *i*, particular affirmatives; hence the mode *Darii*.

In each figure there are ſingular ſyllogiſms, or ſyllogiſms relative to individuals, which cannot be reduced to any of the modes. They are allowed, however, to be legitimate ſyllogiſms, and they are conſtructed on the ſame principle with the reſt. The only difference is, that all the eſtabliſhed modes refer to genus and ſpecies; theſe refer to ſpecies and individual. I ſhall preſent ſome inſtances from Keckerman.

Every traitor deſerves death;
Judas was a traitor;
Therefore, Judas deſerved death.

This syllogism is of the first figure, where the middle term, "traitor," is the subject of the major premise, and the predicate of the minor premise. The following is a particular example of the second figure:

> Socrates was an ugly man;
> Plato was not an ugly man;
> Therefore, Plato was not Socrates.

The middle term, "ugly," is the predicate of both premises. The same logician supplies a particular example of the third figure.

> Judas did not obtain salvation;
> Judas was an apostle;
> Therefore, every apostle did not obtain salvation.

"Judas," is the middle term, and the subject of both premises, according to the requisitions of the third figure.

LECTURE XI.

SYLLOGISM—ITS MERIT AS A MODE OF REASONING.

BESIDES regular, categorical, or pure ſyllogiſms, there are others called *irregular*, becauſe they cannot be reduced to the rules of mode and figure. I ſhall briefly explain the nature of theſe, more in conformity with general practice, than becauſe they are of much importance.

Enthemem, is the firſt ſpecies I ſhall mention. It takes place when one of the propoſitions which conſtitute the premiſes is omitted, and the concluſion is drawn from the other premiſe, as if the ſyllogiſm were regular and complete. The following is an example. If I ſay, either,

Whatever thinks is a ſpiritual ſubſtance,
Therefore, the mind of man is a ſpiritual ſubſtance.

Or,

The mind thinks,
Therefore, the mind is a ſpiritual ſubſtance.

I omit the minor propoſition in the former caſe, and infer the concluſion from the major. I omit the major propoſition in the latter caſe, and infer the ſame concluſion from the minor. It is ſuppoſed in both caſes, that the connection of the concluſion with either premiſe, is ſo apparent as to render unneceſſary the preſence of the other premiſe. The premiſe, in this caſe, is called the antecedent, and the concluſion, the ſequela, or the inference.

Sorites is another ſpecies of irregular ſyllogiſm, and conſiſts in conjoining a ſeries of propoſitions in ſuch a manner, that the predicate of the preceding propoſition forms the ſubject of the ſucceeding. The following is an example.

The mind is a thinking ſubſtance. A thinking ſubſtance is a ſpirit. A ſpirit has no extenſion. What has no extenſion has no parts. What has no parts is indiſſoluble. What is indiſſoluble is immortal. Therefore, the mind is immortal.

This ſpecies, like the former, is only a train of ſyllogiſms abridged, into which it may eaſily be reſolved in the following manner.

All thinking ſubſtances are ſpirits;
The mind is a thinking ſubſtance;
Therefore, the mind is a ſpirit.

Spirits have no extenſion,
The mind is a ſpirit,
Therefore it has no extenſion.

Things having no extenſion have no parts,
The mind has no extenſion,
Therefore, it has no parts.

Things having no parts are indiſſoluble,
The mind has no parts,
Therefore, the mind is indiſſoluble.

Things indiſſoluble are immortal,
The mind is indiſſoluble,
Therefore, the mind is immortal.

Hence it appears, that all the intermediate propoſitions between the firſt and the laſt of a *Sorites* may be formed into ſeparate ſyllogiſms; and that it is equivalent to an argument formed of as many ſyllogiſms, as the argument contains intermediate propoſitions. It may alſo be obſerved, that every idea of the *Sorites* is twice repeated, and that it might be farther abridged without any detriment to the evidence it communicates. Had it ſtood as follows, the agreement of its ideas would have been as clear, and its evidence as ſatisfactory, as in any other form. Mind—thinking ſubſtance—ſpirit—without extenſion—without parts—indiſſoluble—immortal.

Irregular ſyllogiſms, farther, are either conditional or disjunctive. The ſubſequent is a conditional ſyllogiſm. "If the air preſs down bodies

below it, it muſt be a heavy body." The legitimacy of this ſpecies of reaſoning conſiſts in the inference following neceſſarily from the premiſe. It has ſcarcely any logical form. It is an inference from a principle, which inference muſt be admitted if the principle be granted.

A disjunctive ſyllogiſm is proper and legitimate, when the predicate of the premiſe admits an alternative, and when the predicate and alternative involve every poſſible caſe. If the predicate be obviouſly falſe, the alternative of courſe muſt be true. Example:

The mind of man is either corporeal or ſpiritual;
It is not corporeal; therefore, it is ſpiritual.

If the predicate and the alternative do not exhauſt every caſe that can exiſt, the concluſion will be illegitimate. For example: "All neighbours are either friends or enemies; they are not friends; therefore, they are enemies." In this inſtance, the predicate and the alternative do not include every caſe. The greateſt part of neighbours may be neither friends nor enemies; they may be altogether indifferent, and, accordingly, the concluſion is ridiculous.

I obſerved, in the laſt lecture, that of the hundred and ninety-two modes which the three figures contain, no more than fourteen are concluſive. I

ſhall now explain the means by which theſe inconcluſive modes are ſet aſide. Ariſtotle has been at great pains to examine them ſeparately, and to demonſtrate the fallacy of the concluſions they infer; but later logicians have contracted this proceſs by the aid of a few rules, which are either ſelf-evident, or reſult naturally from the conſtruction of a ſyllogiſm. The firſt rule is,

"A ſyllogiſm muſt conſiſt only of three terms."

This rule excludes all ambiguities in the expreſſion which would introduce ſupernumerary terms. All the terms are twice repeated; and in every repetition the ſame ſenſe ſhould be retained. If the ſenſe be changed, the ſyllogiſm is vitiated; becauſe the ambiguous word will ſupply as many terms as it has meanings. The ſubſequent ſyllogiſm is, therefore, fallacious and ridiculous.

Whatever thinks is immaterial;
All ſpirits think;
Therefore, ſpirit of wine is immaterial.

The double meaning of the word *spirit* renders the concluſion abſurd. The ſyllogiſm really conſiſts of four terms, while apparently it conſiſts only of three. The ſecond rule is,

"No ſyllogiſm can conſiſt entirely of particular, or negative propoſitions."

Particular propoſitions cannot infer a concluſion,

because, as I ſhall afterwards ſhew, the ſyllogiſtic art hangs on this principle, "Whatever agrees or diſagrees with a genus, agrees or diſagrees with every ſpecies of that genus;" if, therefore, in any ſyllogiſm no genus is found; if different parts only, either of a genus or a ſpecies, are compared together, no concluſion can reſult, becauſe any inference from ſuch premiſes is illegitimate. Take the following example:

Some animals are beautiful;
Some animals are not beautiful;
Therefore, ſome women are beautiful, and ſome women are not beautiful.

Three negative propoſitions cannot compoſe a legitimate ſyllogiſm, becauſe they form three detached aſſertions; and the truth or falſehood of any one of them has no dependance on the other two. The ſubſequent example will be an illuſtration.

No matter thinks;
No ſpirit is matter;
Therefore, no matter thinks, and no ſpirit is matter.

Another rule is,

"The concluſion muſt be particular, if either of the premiſes be particular; and negative, if either of the premiſes be negative."

This is what the logicians mean when they tell us, that "Conclusio sequitur partem debiliorem." The "pars debilior," is a negative, or a particular premise, compared with an affirmative, or an universal premise. This rule needs little illustration. If either of the premises be negative or particular, the conclusion cannot be general or affirmative, otherwise it would be more extensive than the premises from which it is deduced. The superstructure would project beyond the foundation; a manifest solecism both in philosophy and in arts. In the following syllogism, the conclusion is negative, because the major premise is negative.

No man is immortal;
All kings are men;
Therefore, no king is immortal.

In the subsequent syllogism, the conclusion is particular, because the minor premise is particular.

All good men are happy;
Some men are good;
Therefore, some men are happy.

The last rule is,

"The middle term must be taken universally in one of the premises."

When the middle term is taken univerfally, it refers to a genus; when it is taken particularly, it refers to a fpecies. Were it not taken univerfally in one of the premifes, they would not include a genus, and, confequently, there would be no ratiocination from it to the fpecies. The fyllogifm would confift of particular propofitions, and I have already fhewn, that from fuch premifes no legitimate inference can refult. Take the following example.

Whatever thinks is immaterial;
The mind of man thinks;
Therefore, the mind of man is immaterial.

The middle term, "whatever thinks," is taken univerfally, or includes a genus in the major premife. It is taken particularly, or refers to the fpecies, "mind of man," in the minor premife. The application of thefe rules evinces the illegitimacy of the inconclufive modes, and eftablifhes the authority of the fourteen conclufive ones.

I have now advanced every view and explication which appeared requifite to unfold the nature of that wonderful method of reafoning, on which Ariftotle, the firft and beft logician, has fpent fo much of his time and labour; about which all the learned men of Europe were employed for many ages; and from eminence in which, the higheft li-

terary honours were derived; sometimes the administration of the most important civil offices were conferred. I proceed to discuss its merits as an engine of knowledge.

That I may do it no injustice in the course of the discussion, it may be necessary again to observe, that every syllogism must not be considered as containing a complete argument, or a train of reasoning, if the argument requires more than one intermediate idea. One syllogism, on the contrary, contains only one step of a train of reasoning; and in arranging a train of reasoning in the syllogistic form, as many syllogisms must be made as there are steps or comparisons in that train. I must also observe, that by proceeding in this manner, any train of reasoning, in arts, in science, or in business, may be converted into syllogisms. These remarks may be illustrated by exhibiting the first demonstration of the first book of Euclid in this form. It will be recollected, that the object of the proposition is to prove, that the triangle described on the given line A B, by means of the two circles, the semi-diameter of each of which is the line A B, is equilateral. From the properties of the circle, each of the sides of the triangle is found equal to the base, and the inference is drawn necessarily, that all the sides are equal. This train of reasoning, expressed by syllogisms, will stand as follows:

All the semi-diameters of the same circle are equal;
The lines A B, A C *, are semi-diameters of the same circle;
Therefore, these lines are equal.

All the semi-diameters of the same circle are equal;
The lines B A, B C, are semi-diameters of the same circle;
Therefore, these lines are equal.

Whatever things are equal to the same thing, are equal to one another;
The lines A C and B C are equal to the line A B;
Therefore, the three lines, A B, A C, B C, are equal to one another.

Triangles, having their sides equal, are called equilateral;
The triangle A B C has all its sides equal;
Therefore, it is equilateral.

Now, the point to be investigated is, Whether the syllogistic method of exhibiting this demonstration, or any other train of reasoning, is preferable to that adopted by Euclid, or to the method which places the successive ideas in the nearest juxtaposition, and expresses them in the fewest and plainest

* See the figure in Simson's Euclid.

words. From the example I have given, it will appear, that the ſyllogiſtic form is not nearly ſo conciſe as that of Euclid; for all the ideas of Euclid's demonſtration are expreſſed in one half of the words which are requiſite to conſtitute theſe four ſyllogiſms. Even Euclid's manner of expreſſion is copious and full; and the evidence of his demonſtration would not perhaps have been impaired, had he communicated it as follows. The ſemi-diameters A B and A C, of the one circle, are equal; the ſemi-diameters of A B and B C, of the other circle, are equal alſo; therefore, the triangle is equilateral, and deſcribed on the given line.

But, beſides being more prolix, the ſyllogiſtic method adds no light to the evidence by which the ideas of the train of reaſoning is perceived, which light the ideas poſſeſs not in their natural ſtate of juxtapoſition. Every ſyllogiſm conſiſts of three terms, and the reaſoner muſt have diſcovered the middle term, and obſerved the agreement of it, with the extremes, before he can form the terms into a ſyllogiſm. After the ſyllogiſm is formed, the mind acquires no ſatisfaction from the contemplation of it, which the terms did not ſuggeſt in the ſtate of juxtapoſition. Suppoſe I were to prove, that Socrates was content with his condition, becauſe he was a wiſe man; I ſhould have three terms, of which a ſyllogiſm may be formed, and which in their natural order would ſtand thus: So-

crates—a wife man—content with his condition. I affirm, that the agreement between Socrates and contentment, is as obvious and fatisfactory in the fimple juxtapofition of the terms, as it is after thefe terms are formed into the following fyllogifm.

All wife men are content with their condition;
Socrates was a wife man;
Therefore, Socrates was content with his condition.

Farther, as the fyllogiftic form communicates no additional light, fo neither does it affift in difcovering middle terms. The principal operations of any inveftigation, are the invention of intermediate ideas, and the comparifon of them with one another, and with the extremes. The invention of middle terms, is the chief operation; and excellence in it, is the moft important qualification any inquirer can poffefs. It feems to depend on natural fagacity and acutenefs, fortified and improved by exercife. No art can be of any ufe. From fyllogifm, in particular, no aid can be derived. It does not even pretend to give any aid. Its only object is to affift in the fecond operation, the comparifon of ideas; and we have feen that the fyllogiftic exhibition is not more perfpicuous than the natural one.

But the moft fingular phænomenon of fyllogifm

is, that the conclusion is often a self-evident proposition, sometimes even trifling and insignificant. The discussion of this point will unfold the whole mystery and merit of the method. In converting a train of ideas into the syllogistic form, there must be made as many syllogisms as there are steps or comparisons in the train, and as many as there are ideas in the train, except one. Each idea of the train beginning with the second, is the major term of its respective syllogism; the other two terms of the same syllogism are, one a genus, and the other a species of that genus. The major term is compared first with the one, and then with the other, and must be found either to agree or disagree with both. Take, for example, the train of reasoning formerly mentioned. Human mind—thinking substance—immaterial—indissoluble—immortal, and convert it into syllogisms.

> Whatever perceives, judges, and reasons, is a thinking substance;
> The human mind perceives, judges, and reasons;
> Therefore, the human mind is a thinking substance.

In this syllogism, the major term, "thinking substance," and the second idea of the train, is

compared with the genus, "whatever perceives, judges, and reaſons," in the firſt premiſe, and is found to agree with it. The ſame major term is compared again with the ſpecies, "the human mind," in the concluſion, and is found alſo to agree with it. Now, the genus, "whatever perceives, judges, and reaſons," the ſpecies, "the mind of man," and "thinking ſubſtance," are all the terms of this ſyllogiſm.

Whatever thinks is immaterial;
The human mind thinks;
Therefore, the human mind is immaterial.

"Immaterial," the third idea of the train, and the major term of this ſyllogiſm, is compared firſt with the genus, "whatever thinks," and next with the ſpecies, "the human mind," and is found to agree with both.

Whatever is immaterial is indiſſoluble;
The mind of man is immaterial;
Therefore, the mind of man is indiſſoluble.

"Indiſſoluble," the fourth idea of the train, and the major term of this ſyllogiſm, is compared firſt with the genus, "whatever is immaterial," and next with the ſpecies, "the mind of man," and is found to agree with both.

Whatever is indiſſoluble is immortal;
The mind of man is indiſſoluble;
Therefore, the mind of man is immortal.

"Immortal," the laſt idea of the train, and the major term of this ſyllogiſm, is compared firſt with the genus, "whatever is indiſſoluble," and then with the ſpecies, "the mind of man," and is found to agree with both.

From theſe examples it appears, that the major term of every ſyllogiſm is one of the ideas of the train, beginning with the ſecond; that the minor term of every ſyllogiſm is the firſt idea of the train; and that the middle term of every ſyllogiſm is a genus of the minor. The ſyllogiſms I have formed are all of the firſt figure; but this circumſtance is no objection againſt the remarks I have to make, becauſe all the other figures and modes proceed on the ſame principle, namely, the compariſon of the major term firſt with a genus of the minor, and next with the minor as a ſpecies; or the ſyllogiſms of the other figures may be reduced to thoſe of the firſt in which theſe conditions take place.

What, then, is the myſtery of this mighty ſyllogiſtic art, which has ſo long engaged the attention of learned men, and is ſtill accounted by many of that deſcription to contain ſomething meritorious, or to be an analyſis of the art of reaſon-

ing? It is no more than this, "Whatever agrees with any genus, will agree with every ſpecies of that genus; or whatever diſagrees with any genus, will diſagree with every ſpecies of that genus." If this be the principle of the art, can we wonder at the ſelf-evidence of all the concluſions of all its ſyllogiſms, or that it never gratified ſcience or buſineſs with the diſcovery of any uſeful truth.

When we reflect how genus and ſpecies are formed, it is impoſſible but what agrees or diſagrees with the one, muſt agree or diſagree with the other. What is a genus? It is a collection of all the qualities common to the ſpecies it includes. What agrees, then, with the common qualities of any ſpecies, muſt agree with the ſpecies itſelf, as far as theſe qualities extend; and ſyllogiſm carries the agreement of the major term, with the minor and middle terms, no farther than theſe qualities. What agrees with the genus muſt agree with the ſpecies; it is only an agreement with the ſame thing in different ſituations; the major term agrees or diſagrees with perfectly the ſame qualities, in the genus, with which it agrees or diſagrees in the ſpecies. Hence it appears, that after finding the agreement of the major term with the genus of the minor term, the concluſion, which aſſerts the agreement of the major term with the ſpecies, or the minor term itſelf, muſt be ſelf-evident. To arrange things into ſpecies and genera, is extremely convenient for

the purpofes of language, and fome of the purpofes of philofophy; but to pretend to reafon from the one to the other, feems to be the quinteffence of vanity or folly.

Examine any demonftration of Euclid, any inveftigation of morals, politics, or affairs, and it will be found, that no man in earneft reafons from a genus to a fpecies. A mathematical demonftration confifts of the comparifon of quantities of the fame fpecies; figures are compared with figures; angles with angles; and lines with lines. An inquiry concerning juftice or charity, compares thefe virtues with the principles of reafon, equity, the laws of the community, and the fituations of perfons. A procefs in the arts refers to the theory of the art, and to the example of the moft reputable and fuccefsful practitioners.

It is of little confequence to maintain, that the fyllogiftic art fometimes makes its way into the moft ferious bufinefs, and that every indictment for a crime, for inftance, is a fyllogifm; of which the major premife contains the defcription of the crime, and its punifhment appointed by the law; the minor premife, the application of the law to the cafe of the criminal, and the conclufion, an affertion that the criminal merits the punifhment appointed by the law.

That an indictment ftands in the form of a fyllogifm, no doubt can exift. The major term is the

punishment; the crime committed is the minor term and the species; the description of the crime in the law is the middle term and the genus. The major term, or the punishment, agrees with the genus, or the law; and it agrees also, perhaps, with the minor term and the species, or the crime of the prisoner. But there is not here, strictly speaking, any reasoning. A trial is no more than a scrutiny, whether a particular crime is included under a general law, or whether the indictment accords with truth, when it asserts, that the prisoner, in taking away the property or the life of his fellow-creature, has committed the crime of theft or murder, of which crimes the perpetrators are declared by the law to deserve punishment. There is no more reasoning in this case, than in every application of the principles of science to the particular cases they include. The assertion, for example, that a particular field consists of a certain number of acres, is equally a syllogism with an indictment charging a culprit with the commission of a crime punishable by law. The number of acres, suppose ten, is the major term; the length and breadth of the field, is the minor term and the species; the number of acres of which all fields of the length and breadth of the one under consideration consist, is the middle term and the genus. The major term, ten acres, agrees with the dimensions of all fields of the extent of the one under confide-

ration; it agrees alfo with the dimenfions of the one under confideration; and, therefore, it agrees both with the genus and the fpecies of the fyllogifm.

But, while I reprobate the fyllogiftic method, for being nugatory and infignificant as an inftrument of reafoning, I admit its high merit as an engine of wrangling and controverfy. It was the happieft contrivance that could have been devifed for conducting thofe public difputations and comparative trials, which for ages prevailed in Europe, and in which the difcovery of truth was no part of the ambition of the combatants. The moft ready and acute framer of fyllogifms was fure to retire triumphant. The grand conteft was not whether the fyllogifm contained any ufeful truth. The object of one party was to maintain its legitimacy; of the other, to controvert or deny one of its propofitions. Wrangling thus became a fcience; and the mind of man, apparently enthufiaftic in the difcovery of truth and knowledge, never wandered farther from their paths.

LECTURE XII.

VIEW OF HUMAN KNOWLEDGE—KNOWLEDGE ADDRESSED TO MEMORY.

I HAVE finiſhed every diſcuſſion I had to offer on the art of logic; and, although the courſe has not been long, I am not conſcious of having omitted any thing material relative to the improvement and conduct of the underſtanding in the inveſtigation of truth. I am fully perſuaded of the utility of the rules and theories I have endeavoured to recommend; and that, without careful attention to them, little progreſs can be made in the acquiſition of knowledge. In this, and ſome ſubſequent lectures, I propoſe to lay before you a general view of human knowledge, or of the ſciences and arts which may be objects of our inveſtigation. Such an exhibition may excite emulation, and prompt the love of truth. It will point out the relation which the ſciences and arts bear to one another.

It will flatter us with magnificent conceptions of the capacity of the human mind, and of the diſtinguiſhed ſuperiority communicated by intellectual attainments.

Such a view, if the example of Ariſtotle may be allowed to have any weight, may even be conſidered as a neceſſary appendage to the ſcience of logic. For, in one of his treatiſes on the art, he has attempted to exhibit ſuch a view, arranged under ten general heads, which he calls catagories, or predicaments, containing, in his opinion, every ſubject of knowledge that can exiſt. To theſe heads, he gives the names of ſubſtance, quantity, quality, relation, action, paſſion, time, place, poſition, habit. This whimſical ſyſtem will be found explained with much patience and learning in the philoſophical arrangements of Mr Harris.

All human knowledge is conceived to conſiſt of ſciences and arts, between which it is difficult to fix the diſtinction with accuracy; and accordingly, we ſometimes find the ſame branch of knowledge denominated, promiſcuouſly, a ſcience and an art. All the principles of human ſcience have ſome reference to practice, and the theory of every art may merit the appellation of a ſcience. Some difference, however, there is between them, which, as far as it is of any importance, may be characteriſed in the following manner: A ſcience is a ſyſtem of general truths relative to ſome branch of

useful knowledge, and supported by evidence, either demonstrative or highly probable. An art is the application of the organs of the body, or the faculties of the mind, to the execution of some design, directed by the best principles and rules of practice. A science is addressed entirely to the understanding; an art generally occupies both the understanding and the members of the body. A science is acquired by study alone; an art cannot be acquired without much practice of the operations it contains. Accurate knowledge is all that is necessary in science; eminence in art demands, besides, an acquaintance with rules, and the habit of dextrous and ready performance.

In delineating a plan of human knowledge, we begin with the division of it into three great compartments, adapted to the three principal faculties of the mind, (the memory, the understanding, and the imagination), to which the subjects of these compartments may be conceived to be respectively addressed. To the memory may be addressed, history; to the understanding, philosophy; and to the imagination, poetry. These words, history, philosophy, poetry, are taken in their most extensive meanings, and we shall find that they may comprehend every branch of human knowledge. Under history are included all facts relative to nature or society, of which we can obtain intelligence, and which we can commit to record. Under

philosophy, is contained all information relative to sciences or arts, attainable by the exercise of the understanding, or by experience and practice. Under poetry, are implied all those branches of knowledge, which in any form contribute chiefly to engage or interest the imagination. These great divisions will be perceived to run into one another, because different branches of knowledge are generally addressed to more of those faculties than one. This inconvenience, therefore, was unavoidable in such a classification; but it is fortunately of little moment, because the object being to obtain a complete sketch of human knowledge, provided all the branches, somewhere, make their appearance, it is not very material in what department they are exhibited.

History is divided into three parts, Sacred, Civil, and Natural.

Sacred history comprehends the narrative parts of revelation, and the history of the church, commonly called Ecclesiastical History. It contains the history of the Jews, both political and ecclesiastical; the history of the propagation and progress of Christianity, as far as they were carried on by Jesus Christ, and his immediate successors the apostles; and the history of the Christian churches, from the æra of the apostles to the present time.

Civil, or, as it is ſometimes called, profane hiſtory, in oppoſition to ſacred, contains an account of the governments, of the civil and military tranſactions of nations; and is a moſt important portion of knowledge. It diſplays thoſe great exhibitions of human nature, which the preſervation of the happineſs of large communities of men, and the convulſions of ſocieties, frequently produce. It preſents the moſt inſtructive leſſons in morality and in politics, thoſe moſt uſeful ſciences, which provide for the felicity and comfort of individuals and nations. It recounts the noble deeds of the patriot and the hero, and inſinuates, by their example, the moſt ſalutary inſtruction, while it holds forth the cruelty of the oppreſſor, or the irregularities and crimes of bad men, as the cauſes of their miſery. All cultivated nations have exhibited ſpecimens of their progreſs in this branch of knowledge.

Another portion of civil, is literary hiſtory; or, an account of the origin and progreſs of learning, with the revolutions it has undergone in different ages and ſituations. The incidents of this branch are not ſo ſplendid as thoſe of the former. They are, however, well entitled to regard. Civil hiſtory diſplays the qualities of the ſtateſman and the warrior. Literary hiſtory unfolds the productions of the imagination, of the heart, and of the underſtanding, and illuſtrates the effects of exter-

nal circumſtances, in calling forth, or repreſſing the exertions of the man of genius, and of the philoſopher. Next to proviſion for the ſafety and happineſs of individuals and communities, thoſe purſuits which advance the character of human nature, and promote its civilization, its refinement, and its dignity, are the moſt meritorious objects of general attention.

Profane hiſtory includes farther, memoirs, annals, biography, and is intimately connected with antiquities, chronology, and geography.

A memoir is a familiar narration, in which the author attempts not the profound diſcuſſion, nor the dignity of ſtyle of the hiſtorian. He preſents a ſimple and plain relation of the facts, and leaves reflections and comments to the reader. A work of this ſort, executed with ability, poſſeſſes many attractions, and generally gains admirers. It is allowed to be more circumſtantial, and of courſe becomes more pictureſque than regular hiſtory. It admits the reader into more intimate familiarity with the author, and communicates inſtruction with the eaſe of converſation, without aſſuming the auſtere, and leſs pleaſant tone of teaching.

Annals are a hiſtory conſtructed in the form of a journal, and bind it ſometimes ſo cloſely in the trammels of chronology, that the author muſt never depart from the order of time, nor anticipate any

part of his narrative, to connect the several incidents of any great event. The transactions which occur within the year must appear in their proper places; and if the events extend over several years before their completion, the annual portions of them are detached, and related apart. The annalist seldom attempts to throw much interest into his work, or to convey any knowledge besides a distinct and accurate view of facts. He never almost endeavours to adorn his relation, or to interweave in it moral or political information. He undertakes the humble task of delineating with accuracy the naked facts, and leaves the historian to embellish them. He is properly the pioneer of the historian, and contributes greatly to shorten his labour, and to accelerate his progress.

Though what I have said explains the nature of the work, and unfolds the etymology of the name of the annalist, the doctrine I have delivered has not always been strictly followed. Both Thucydides and Tacitus have given to their highly finished histories the form, and the latter even the name, of annals. Thucydides has imposed harder conditions upon himself than are demanded by the rigid rules of annals; he divides his narrative into periods of half a year, and scruples not to mince his transactions into fragments, to make them correspond to this minute distribution of his time. The annals

of Scotland, publiſhed by Sir David Dalrymple, realize my idea of this ſpecies of writing.

Biography records the lives of eminent individuals, and is ſuſceptible of much intereſt. The perſonages may be ſelected from any of the orders of ſociety. They may be men of letters, of pleaſure, of buſineſs. They may be kings, ſtateſmen, politicians, artiſts, warriors. The relation of their lives may comprehend many entertaining ſtrictures on the character and conduct of thoſe with whom they have been connected, beſides many important openings into the hiſtory of the times in which they lived.

Antiquities, chronology, and geography, are the handmaids of hiſtory. Antiquities contain diſcuſſions concerning monuments, political, military, ſepulchral, or etymological, that tranſcend the limits of hiſtory, and relate to events, or cuſtoms, or opinions, about which no other documents exiſt. The early tranſactions of all communities are involved in obſcurity, becauſe the compoſition and preſervation of records hardly appear unleſs in an advanced ſtate of civilization. There is, however, in all men a deſire of perpetuating the memory of events which they reckon important, as well as of inveſtigating the meaning of manners, practices, and opinions, of which the origin is obſcure. Hence ſtones, and coins, and columns, the moſt

durable materials with which men are acquainted before the ufe of writing, are naturally felected to gratify this defire. The moft important branch, however, of antiquities, relates to the obfcurities of hiftory, manners, and laws. "Antiquitates," fays Lord Bacon in this fenfe, "hiftoriæ deformatæ funt, five reliquiæ hiftoriæ, quæ cafu e naufragio temporum ereptæ funt." Without fome knowledge of antiquities, neither old laws, nor many important ufages in languages, in affairs, and in public rites and ceremonies, can be underftood. The explanation of thefe is always grateful, and is often productive of ufeful difcoveries, relative to titles, honours, and property.

The bufinefs of Chronology is to affign to events the order of time in which they happened. Without it a relation of facts is a mafs of confufion, which the memory can neither retain nor apply to any ufe. It forms into a fyftem the tranfactions of nations, and diftinguifhes the progrefs of fcience, manners, and arts. The revolutions of the heavenly bodies are the beft, and the moft univerfal meafure of time; but the habit of obferving them with accuracy is of late acquifition, and appears not till confiderable progrefs has been made in mathematics and aftronomy. The chronology of ancient hiftory, is, for this reafon, not a little imperfect, becaufe it is difficult to reduce to any fixed point the æras from which the authors reckon.

Even the commencement of the Olympiads, and the building of Rome, are not perfectly determined; while the chronology of the Jews, and of the early Greeks, is hardly supported by better evidence than conjecture.

The chronology, then, of history is ascertained for a period, extending backward two thousand six hundred years from the commencement of the Olympiads, (about eight hundred years before the birth of Christ), to the present time. The books of the Old Testament are the only written records which exist previous to the commencement of the Olympiads; and as the authors either could not, or did not fix their chronology, many systems have been formed to supply that defect. Of these systems, the most rational and satisfactory is that advanced by Sir Isaac Newton, who, guided by the most perfect knowledge of the revolutions and phenomena of the heavenly bodies, and a luminous theory respecting the duration of the reigns of the kings of the Jews, has thrown a light on this intricate and curious subject, of which the reader could not easily have supposed it to be susceptible, and with which he must be highly satisfied.

As the design of chronology is to determine the time, the purpose of geography is to fix the place of the transactions recorded in history. Geography exhibits in miniature the positions of all the places

on the face of the globe, with their bearings or their relative ſituations. It brings the ſurface of the earth in ſome meaſure under the eye of the ſpectator, and communicates a more perfect idea of its form, and of its parts, than could be conveyed by an actual ſurvey. It is commonly divided into two parts, general and particular. The former treats of the figure of the earth, and the theory of winds, tides, and currents. But with this branch hiſtory has little connection; it is chiefly indebted to particular geography, which delineates the ſituations of kingdoms, cities, rivers, mountains, coaſts, and ſeas. When the ſituations of theſe are underſtood, the reader more eaſily comprehends the tranſactions of which theſe form the field; the marches and operations of armies; the navigations and encounters of fleets; the effects of climate, and the produce of ſoils.

Many authors have exerted their ingenuity and induſtry to improve this curious and uſeful branch of knowledge; but the ſuperior progreſs of the moderns in navigation and aſtronomy, has enabled them to carry the geographic art to a degree of perfection unknown to the ancients. The ſituations of places are determined by their diſtance from the north or ſouth poles, called their latitude; and by their diſtance, eaſt or weſt, from ſome fixed point, ſuch as Greenwich, or the Peak of

Teneriffe, called their longitude. The moderns have had accefs to every point almoft on the face of the globe, the knowledge of which could be of much ufe; and their dexterity in aftronomical obfervations has enabled them to affign many of thefe diftances with accuracy.

Natural, was the third branch of hiftory, and includes a large field of knowledge, both ufeful and entertaining. It comprehends an account of all the productions in the heavens, and on the earth, which are, or may be the objects of our fenfes, together with the changes that may be made on thefe productions by means of art. This part of natural hiftory, which Lord Bacon calls Narrative, and which is addreffed to memory, falls under confideration at prefent. The ufe which may be made of it, towards afcertaining the laws of nature, called inductive by the fame author, belongs to the fciences of natural philofophy and chemiftry. Natural hiftory, then, in the light in which I now furvey it, is divided into two branches, one containing the productions of nature, whether ordinary and regular, or extraordinary and monftrous; and the other, the productions of art. The bufinefs of the natural hiftorian is to recount every fact and circumftance relative to thefe productions.

The productions of nature are divided into thofe of the heavens, thofe of the atmofphere, and thofe

of the earth. The productions of the heavens are the phænomena of the solar system, and of the fixed stars. The phænomena of the solar system are numerous and brilliant; those of the fixed stars scarce contain more particulars than their names and positions. The phænomena of the solar system are copiously recorded by several popular writers, particularly by Keil and Fergusson; and from them it appears, that much progress has been made by the moderns in this curious branch of knowledge, beyond what was attained by the ancients. The Ptolemaic system, which placed the earth in the centre, was generally received by the ancients; and the true system, which places the sun in the centre, seems not to have been surmised before the days of Copernicus, who lived about two hundred years ago. It was reserved for Newton, in the end of the seventeenth century, to apply to that system the most enlightened theory ever devised by the mind of man; and to establish it by evidence, which leaves no doubt of its truth, while it communicates such ample information, as scarcely permits a desire to know more on the subject.

The phænomena of the atmosphere relate to the elasticity, the altitude, and weight of the air; to meteors, lightning, thunder, clouds, auroræ boreales, snow, hail, rain; to the reflection and refrac-

tion of the rays of the ſun, the rainbow, evaporation, dews, winds, &c. all which form curious and intereſting ſubjects of inveſtigation; and of the greater part of which modern philoſophy has collected the hiſtory, and has endeavoured to aſcertain the theory. A great deal, however, ſtill remains to be done, notwithſtanding the very rapid advances which have lately been made in theſe branches of knowledge.

The phænomena of the earth relates to its figure, to its diviſion into land and water, and to the productions which are found above and below its ſurface. Its ſpherical figure firſt merits attention, which, though contrary to appearance, and to the opinions of the vulgar, yet is ſo completely eſtabliſhed by phyſical arguments and experiments, that no doctrine in philoſophy is better ſupported. Its diviſion into land and water next attracts curioſity, and the large proportion which the ſurface of the water bears to that of the land. The moſt remarkable phænomena of the water are the tides and currents, together with the innumerable varieties of animals and vegetables to which it affords life.

With regard to land, the firſt phænomena which ſummon obſervation, are the figures of the two great continents, extending far from ſouth to north, and affording much variety of climates,

ſoils, and productions; the direction and magnitude of rivers; the extent, the altitude, the figure of mountains; the great lakes of freſh water, the ſands and rocks with which they are interſperſed. The ſituations and figures of iſlands next attract our notice, with their immenſe diſtances from one another, and afford curious and intereſting inquiries concerning the manner in which they have been repleniſhed with the animals and vegetables they contain. All theſe phænomena belong to the geographer to recount and to explain; thoſe I am to enumerate fall within the province of the natural hiſtorian.

He divides the productions of the earth into animals, vegetables, and minerals. Under animals, he comprehends all living creatures, from man to the meaneſt inſect; and of every ſpecies he attempts to deliver the hiſtory, as far as obſervation or information can afford him materials. This is an exceedingly curious and important branch of knowledge, and conſiderable progreſs has been made in it by human induſtry.

From animals, the natural hiſtorian proceeds to vegetables. He examines, and reduces into claſſes, all the plants which the earth produces. From the ſurface, he deſcends into the bowels of the earth, examines the nature and poſition of the ſtrata of which it is compoſed, and all the varieties

of minerals which it presents to his observation. Much laudable progress, it must be confessed, has already been made in collecting specimens, and in arranging into classes, the materials of these kingdoms of nature. But a great deal remains to be performed; and natural historians have often spent their time in idle disputes about classification, rather than in adding to the general stock of knowledge, and enlarging our acquaintance with the objects that exist.

Even the history of nature, for these reasons, is still far from being complete; and the whole theory of general principles, which Lord Bacon calls the inductive part, and which he declares was totally wanting in his time, may still be affirmed not to be very far advanced.

The history of the mechanic arts, which are the experiments and operations performed on the materials furnished by nature, forms the last branch of knowledge addressed to the memory. The phænomena of the fine arts will be better introduced under the branch addressed to the imagination. It is vain for me to attempt to specify the operations of the mechanic or useful arts, with many of which I am not acquainted, and which, though I were acquainted with them, I should not perhaps be able to describe, so as to make you understand them. The materials about which they are exerted, are almost as numerous and

various as are the different ſubſtances and combinations of ſubſtances which this earth preſents. Should more accurate information be requiſite, recourſe muſt be had to the practitioners in the different arts.

LECTURE XIII.

VIEW OF HUMAN KNOWLEDGE—KNOWLEDGE ADDRESSED TO THE UNDERSTANDING.

THE branch of human knowledge addreſſed to the underſtanding, to the conſideration of which I now proceed, is the moſt extenſive, as it comprehends all the ſciences, and the theories of all the arts. If we divide it according to its objects, it will reſolve itſelf into two departments, the knowledge of mind, and the knowledge of body. This diviſion would be very convenient, if mind and body were always found disjoined, or were we not frequently obliged to contemplate them united. But in all inquiries concerning human nature and human acquiſitions, which conſtitute a large portion of this department of knowledge, mind and body are connected by the cloſeſt relations, and muſt be ſurveyed and examined in that compound-

ed ſtate. We are neceſſitated, for this reaſon, to adopt another diviſion, more adapted to the actual arrangement of the objects in nature; and to conſider knowledge as referring to mind unconnected with body, or to mind and body connected, or to body unconnected with mind. In other words, to conſider it as referring to God and ſpirits, to man and human nature, to irrational animals, to vegetables, and to inanimate matter.

Of the world of ſpirits we know nothing, except what we learn from the experience of the operations of our own minds, and from the general analogy which we are apt to infer ſubſiſts among ſpirits of all orders. Between us and the great Spirit that made the univerſe, whom we cannot ſuppoſe to have any connection with matter, there may be, for any thing we know, infinite gradations of ſpirits, who may be more or leſs connected with body according to their elevation in the ſcale of being. But what are their natures, their endowments, their predilections, or their antipathies, we are at preſent altogether ignorant, and are perhaps incapable of receiving information.

We are no leſs ignorant of the nature of the firſt Spirit, particularly of what are called his incommunicable attributes, ſelf-exiſtence, eternity, omnipotence, and infinity. Though we muſt admit that theſe attributes conſtitute ingredients of the character of a perfect being, yet what the ingre-

dients are, we can now form no adequate conception; and perhaps we never ſhall be competent to the taſk. The moral attributes of the Almighty, goodneſs, mercy, judgement, and veracity, are more adapted to human comprehenſion, and form the ground-work of all the ſcience we deduce from his nature. We poſſeſs, indeed, no adequate idea even of theſe attributes; but it ſeems fair to preſume, that they reſemble in quality, though very different in degree, the virtues which are diſtinguiſhed by the ſame names among men. The delineation of the doctrines and principles which reſult from theſe attributes, forms the ſcience of natural religion, and part of the ſcience of metaphyſics.

Natural religion comprehends the proofs for the exiſtence of God, which reſult from the order, the beauty, and the deſign conſpicuous in the works of nature. We cannot controvert the reality of theſe qualities, nor ſuppoſe that the works of nature came into exiſtence without a cauſe. No other ſolution can be admitted, than that they originated from ſome great, good, and wiſe Being, who made all other beings, and governs all the operations in nature; who can act from no motive, and upon no ſyſtem, which embrace not general happineſs; who has a right to command the obedience of every creature, and in obey-

ing whom only a rational agent can expect happineſs.

The metaphyſical part of knowledge relative to God, contains diſcuſſions concerning the neceſſity of his exiſtence, independence, infinity, eternity, omnipotence, which are uſually reckoned a branch of Pneumatics. All theſe topics have been often and fully canvaſſed, and little now remains to be advanced upon them. The pneumatical branch, in particular, has afforded ample field for profound inveſtigation, in which ſeveral writers of bold genius have indulged themſelves in ſpeculations, which tranſcend, perhaps, the compaſs of human powers, and which, therefore, ſhould be relinquiſhed as unprofitable. But they deſerve a more ſevere cenſure, if they contribute, as they ſometimes do, to controvert the principles of truth, and to defend the cauſe of ſcepticiſm.

The branches of knowledge relative to man, reſpect either the faculties of his mind, or the uſe he makes of theſe faculties, firſt, in acquiring and communicating knowledge, and, ſecondly, in acquiring happineſs. The ſcience which explains the faculties is a branch of Pneumatics; the ſciences which teach the modes of acquiring and communicating knowledge, are denominated Logic and Rhetoric; and the ſcience which delineates the road to happineſs, has obtained the name of Morality.

Pneumatics form a general hiſtory of the facul-

ties of the mind. The exertions of these faculties constitute the sciences of logic, rhetoric, and morality. Pneumatics, and these sciences, for this reason, run into one another; and in general views of human knowledge, it is unnecessary and inconvenient to contemplate them apart. I shall, therefore, proceed to the latter sciences, the survey of which will afford place for exhibiting every thing valuable in the science of pneumatics.

Logic, or the art which delineates the progress of the understanding in the investigation of truth, contains, as we have seen, three parts, the doctrine of ideas, of propositions, of reasoning or proof. On all which, having delivered my opinion pretty fully in some preceding lectures, I shall not now enlarge. Rhetoric includes, at least presupposes, the arts subservient to retention and recollection; but its proper business is to unfold the art of communication. The arts subservient to retention and recollection, are those of writing and printing; by which general knowledge is accumulated, present inquirers are made acquainted with the acquisitions of preceding ages, and may transmit their stores to posterity. The art of communication is conversant about grammar, composition, and criticism.

Grammar divides words into classes, and treats of their inflections, their syntax, and their prosody.

Compofition teaches us to communicate our thoughts with perfpicuity and proper ornament. Criticifm informs us whether we have been fuccefsful. It qualifies us to read with difcernment and improvement, and to determine the literary merit of the performances we perufe.

Morality, or the fcience of happinefs, may be divided into two great branches, one relative to individuals, and the other relative to communities.

The branch refpecting individuals, comprehends many important topics of inveftigation; namely, that the happinefs of fuch a compound conftitution as the human, confifting of reafon, confcience, many paffions, and appetites, muft refult from an arrangement which permits gratification to each of thefe parts, in proportion to its dignity and confequence, and that this arrangement is recommended by the principles of virtue; that the laws of human conduct are manifeftly marked by the nature of man; and that his conftitution points out the will of his Creator, with the obligations to integrity which arife from this will; that the performance of the duties which man owes to his Maker, his neighbour, and himfelf, is not only dictated by obligation, but alfo by intereft, becaufe, in proportion as he deviates from thefe duties, he deviates from happinefs; and that the beft man is, and muft be the happieft, as virtue is the trueft wifdom, the

beſt knowledge, and the moſt ſolid conſolation; while vice is folly, ignorance, and miſery.

The morality that regards the happineſs of communities, conſtitutes the ſcience of politics, which reſolves itſelf into three branches; the firſt, containing the laws of peace and war, or the rules which guide the intercourſe of communities, founded on the practice of civilized nations, and the dictates of equity; the ſecond, delineating the different civil governments which have been contrived, or adopted to ſecure the ſafety of ſtates, with the proſperity and comfort of individuals; and the third, exhibiting economical arrangements, or the laws which puniſh crimes, and encourage induſtry, protect and cheriſh commerce and arts.

From the topics which conſtitute the ſciences of morality and politics, it appears, that they are of the greateſt importance both to individuals and communities. As ſoon, therefore, as human nature acquired any degree of refinement, and virtue and induſtry were found to be ſubſervient to its felicity, theſe ſciences could not fail to attract the attention both of the man of ſpeculation and of buſineſs. They muſt have been found to be the beſt guides of the ſtateſman, and of the private citizen. Theories and diſcuſſions concerning them are accordingly diſcovered in early periods of ſociety; to which have been added ſuch copious im-

provements, by the enlightened genius of later times, that few branches of knowledge ſeem more completely inveſtigated. It is pleaſant to think, that the mind of man has been adequate to any ſatisfactory inveſtigation. In very few ſciences has it been more ſucceſsful.

Human knowledge, relative to body, animated or inanimated, is divided into three branches; the firſt, containing the metaphyſics of body, or an account of its general properties, extenſion, ſolidity, impenetrability, motion, vacuum, &c.; the ſecond, regarding the ſurfaces of bodies, or the computation of the quantities of which theſe ſurfaces conſiſt; and the third, reſpecting the internal parts of bodies, or their ſtructure and conſtitution. Every inquiry relative to body muſt be comprehended under ſome one of theſe branches.

In diſcuſſing the metaphyſics or general properties of body, we diſcover that extenſion is an eſſential quality, and that it is the chief quality which diſtinguiſhes body from ſpirit. We inquire, farther, whether all matter be ſolid and impenetrable, that is, whether it reſiſts the entrance of extraneous matter into the place it occupies, however impelled by any force; and we find, that though ſome matter is compreſſible, yet that all matter reſiſts the entrance of extraneous matter into the place it occupies, till it be permitted to retire, and that in this ſenſe it is ſolid and impenetrable.

We diſcover, alſo, that motion is an occaſional

property of body, though it ſeems incapable of aſſuming that property to itſelf. It muſt receive motion from ſome external power, but when received, it retains motion till it is deprived of that property by ſome other, or by the ſame external power. We inquire, next, whether all ſpace is filled with matter, or whether nature admits a vacuum, that is, ſpace void of body. This queſtion has been the cauſe of long and bitter controverſy, one ſect of philoſophers maintaining, that all ſpace is full of matter, and that nature abhors a vacuum, which were the ſentiments of the Carteſian ſchool; while the greater part of the followers of Newton have embraced the doctrine of a vacuum, and have been of opinion, that the phænomena of the air-pump alone are ſufficient to eſtabliſh that doctrine.

It is amuſing, and even uſeful to the ſtudent, to gain an acquaintance with this metaphyſical philoſophy, becauſe it has engaged the attention and employed the time of many learned and ingenious men; but it is involved in obſcurity, and obnoxious to controverſy, on account of the intricacy of the topics of which it treats. Till time and experiments, therefore, ſhall throw more light upon it, the inquirer who wiſhes to employ his pains to the beſt advantage, will haſten over this field, that he may have more leiſure to inveſtigate others which promiſe more pleaſure and emolument.

The ſciences concerned about the ſurfaces of bodies are three, Arithmetic, Geometry, and Natural Philoſophy, which were called by the ancients *Mathemata*, or the moſt illuſtrious knowledge, on account of the importance of the truths they contain, and the complete evidence by which they are ſupported. Arithmetic, which in an extended ſenſe includes algebra, is the ſcience of computation. Its object is quantity dicrete, or divided into parts, and the deſign of all its operations is to aſcertain the numbers of theſe parts, as far as the knowledge of them may be ſubſervient to the purpoſes of human life. All we can wiſh to know relative to numbers, is to determine the amount of particular ſums of units, which is obtained by the operation called *addition*; or to aſcertain their difference, which is performed by the operation called *subtraction*. Into theſe operations, therefore, all the operations of arithmetic and algebra, however intricate and remote, are reſolvable. Multiplication and diviſion are nothing but abridgements of addition and ſubtraction. Many of the operations of arithmetic and algebra, depend upon the doctrine of proportion; and in all theſe operations, if three of the terms be known, the fourth may be found, by the rule of three in arithmetic, or by an equation in algebra. The foundation of both methods is, that the product of the extremes is equal to that of the means.

The inveſtigations of algebra differ not eſſen-

tially from thofe of arithmetic, except in three particulars. The former proceed by equations, in which the quantity fought is included; they are expreffed by letters inftead of figures; and they may be applied to continuous quantity as well as to difcrete.

In all arithmetical and algebraical queftions, fomething is given, and fomething fought; or fomething is known, and fomething unknown. Between thefe, fome ratio may generally be difcovered, fo that if both the given and the fought quantities be denoted by fymbols or letters, an equation may be deduced from that ratio, which will involve the value of the unknown quantity. When the equation is found, the fequel of the operation is eafy; for it is always practicable, by means of addition and fubtraction, to place the known quantities on one fide of the equation, and the unknown quantity on the other, from which pofition its value will be apparent.

The fymbols or letters of an equation may exprefs either numerical or mathematical quantities; they may fignify lines as well as numbers. The addition, then, of two letters, may denote the fum of two numbers, or the length of two lines; and the multiplication of two letters may fignify the product of two numbers, or the rectangle contained by two lines. It is this capacity of denoting quantities of all forts, which has procured to alge-

bra the name of universal arithmetic, and from its capacity of operating with unknown quantities, as if they were known, it has obtained the name of analysis, and has superseded in a great measure the analytic method of the ancients.

Algebra has been particularly useful in explaining the operations of arithmetic, the extraction of roots, and the properties of curve lines. In all which cases it has communicated the most important information, and has facilitated exceedingly the progress of science. But the application of it to numerical questions, which was the chief use of it previous to the middle of the seventeenth century, was rather a matter of amusement than of utility. Des Cartes first employed it in geometrical questions, since which time it has been the favourite mode of investigation. The ancient method of analysis may excel it in simplicity and elegance, but in point of expedition, and extensive use, in the most difficult physical researches, its resources are important, and its superiority decisive.

The ancient and elegant method of computing continuous quantity, or the extent of the surfaces and of the solidity of bodies, is geometry, the science of superficies's and solids. The elements of this science are divided into three parts; the first, treating of the properties of plain figures; the second, of those of solids; and the third, of those of

the curve lines, called Conic Sections. Euclid has discussed the first in his first six books; the second, in his eleventh and twelfth; and Apollonius, the third, in his elaborate treatise on the subject. In all these works, the merit of the ancient geometers is very great. The elements of Euclid, it seems, are the most perfect productions in science. All the ingenuity of modern times has not added to their merit, nor superseded their use. They appear to have sprung nearly as complete and satisfactory from the hands of their author, as we still survey them. The cones of Apollonius display profound knowledge, and great industry, but they are not so finished as the Elements. The arrangement of them has been improved, several of the demonstrations have been abridged and generalised, and many useful corollaries have been subjoined by the additional attention of modern mathematicians.

But if we except some progress made in the doctrine of the sphere, and of eclipses, by Proclus; in the investigation of the mechanical powers, hydrostatics, and the art of calculating curvilineal spaces, from the method of approximation, by Archimedes; we have enumerated all the advancements achieved by the ancients in this most illustrious of sciences. They had acquired little knowledge of mixed mathematics, or the application of them to physical purposes, now called Natural Phi-

losophy. They knew nothing of the true solar system, and of the laws that direct its motions, which Sir Isaac Newton has investigated with so much success and universal applause. They knew something of the doctrine of reflected light, as we learn from the famous contrivance of Archimedes, for setting fire to the Roman ships at the siege of Syracuse, by means of burning glasses. But they seem to have understood little of the theory of optics, and nothing of the curious doctrine of light and colours.

In all these mathematical branches, much progress has been made by the combined efforts of the ancients and moderns. It requires much time and industry to attain to acquaintance with what has been discovered and established; and it seems difficult to add new truths to those already known. It would, however, be presumptuous to set bounds to the researches of future genius, or to conclude that the mathematical sciences are susceptible of no additional improvement. It may be reserved for some extraordinary luminary, like Newton, farther to unfold the secrets of nature, and to extend the boundaries of science, even in a field in which human investigation has been crowned with such brilliant success.

It must be admitted, that the refined and abstract nature of the higher parts of mathematics will prevent them from being objects of general attention.

But all philosophers and artists may, notwithstanding, avail themselves of the practical principles they present; and every inquirer who can pretend to the advantages of a liberal education, should study the Elements. Besides the utility of the truths they contain, in the whole circle of the sciences, there is no equal exemplification of the rules of sound logic, no such noble exercise of the distinguished faculty of reason, and no means by which the mind can be fortified so effectually for the discovery of truth in every other branch of investigation.

But, independent of forming a part of polite education, and of the advantage derived from the salutary exercise of the reasoning faculty, the elements demand attention on account of the necessary connection they have with many of the common and useful arts. The principles of all sorts of machinery are derived from them, together with the laws which direct the most profitable application of force, whether of animals, of water, or of air. The art of surveying is an immediate practice of the most simple deductions of this science, and of course the arts of delineating maps and charts, which convey, in a manner satisfactory and expeditious, the knowledge of the situations and bearings of places on the earth which we have never seen.

The whole theory of longitude and latitude is deduced from the same source, without which nei-

ther the conſtruction of maps, charts, nor globes, could have exiſted. The face of the earth would have remained unknown, as navigation muſt have been confined to the ancient dangerous and circumſcribed method of coaſting. The uſeful and ingenious art of ſhip-building owes all, or the greater part, of its merits to the principles of mathematics. Fortification and gunnery, theſe dreadful, but, it ſeems, neceſſary arts, have derived almoſt all their improvements from the ſame origin. In a word, in whatever light we ſurvey the Elements, whether as an uſeful or an ornamental ſtudy, they merit highly the attention of every perſon who is ambitious of diſtinguiſhing himſelf, either as a philoſopher, or a man of buſineſs.

LECTURE XIV.

VIEW OF HUMAN KNOWLEDGE—KNOWLEDGE ADDRESSED TO THE UNDERSTANDING—TO THE IMAGINATION.

I HAVE exhibited a view of knowledge relative to the general properties, and the ſurfaces of bodies, or what are called the metaphyſics of matter, and the ſciences of quantity. It remains that I enumerate and explain the branches regarding the nature, the ſtructure, and the compoſition of bodies, which was the third diviſion of knowledge reſpecting matter.

This compartment is ſubdivided into three parts; the general laws or properties of bodies; the internal ſtructure of animals, with their diſeaſes and cures; and the ingredients or component parts of bodies. The firſt, conſtitutes the ſcience, or the philoſophy of natural hiſtory; the ſecond, medi-

cine; and the third, chemiſtry. I formerly mentioned natural hiſtory as a record of facts, I now ſpeak of it as a branch of philoſophy.

The ſtudy of natural hiſtory is anxiouſly and repeatedly recommended by Lord Bacon, as neceſſary to furniſh materials for erecting the great temple of natural knowledge. The philoſopher inveſtigates, compares, compounds, and ſeparates theſe materials, till he deduces the general laws of agreement and diſagreement among the works of God, and eſtabliſhes the doctrine of the moſt enlightened and ſatisfactory ſcience. Lord Bacon led the way in this new and noble path to fame; and though the progreſs of that eminent inquirer could not be great, yet he had the merit of foreſeeing and predicting the achievements of poſterity.

Of the three claſſes of natural hiſtory, animals, vegetables, and minerals, that of animals exhibits the moſt illuſtrious marks of wiſdom and deſign, though the other two are not deſtitute of conſpicuous ſpecimens of the ſame qualities. Not to mention the inſtincts, or mental powers which all animals poſſeſs in ſome degree, and man in great eminence; their external form, the conſtruction of their bodies, and the final cauſes, or uſes to which their members are ſubſervient, diſplay marks of contrivance ſuperior to thoſe found in any other of the works of nature.

Animals poſſeſs the power of ſelf-motion, of ſenſation, of ſeeking and appropriating nouriſhment. Their organs are more complicated, and their changes more rapid, than thoſe of vegetables. Some vegetables poſſeſs a degree of irritability. They contract on the application of ſtimuli. Few, however, are gifted with this power, far the greater number being ſuſceptible of no movement, except what reſults from the elaſticity of their roots, branches, and leaves. They have not, like animals, any feeling of pleaſure or pain; and they can imbibe nouriſhment from thoſe parts of matter only with which they are in permanent contact.

But though theſe differences are conſpicuous in the greater part of animals and vegetables, yet in the lower ſpecies of the former, and in the higher ſpecies of the latter, they in a great meaſure diſappear; and it is difficult to determine where the claſs of animals terminates, and that of vegetables begins. The polypus, which generates as many animals of its kind, as are the parts into which it may be divided, ſeems not to be endowed with a much higher degree of vitality, than that which is poſſeſſed by many vegetables.

Both in the animal and vegetable kingdom, the ſmaller ſpecies are more numerous than the larger. There are many more inſects than there are men; the plants of graſs are more numerous than the

trees; and the number of flies furpaffes that of horfes.

As animals defcend to vegetables, fo the latter approach minerals. Minerals are called inorganized, or inanimate bodies. They feem to compofe the mafs of the globe; certainly, at leaft, its external cruft. They increafe in volume; but this feems to arife entirely from the juxta-pofition of parts, and the force of attraction, or that affimilating power of nature which generates from different combinations of the fame materials, parts of fuch different conftitutions and ufes. The afcent of juices in vegetables feems to depend on the principles by which water rifes in capillary tubes. Vegetables grow with a rapidity palpable and confpicuous. In a fhort fpace of time many of them reach perfection, after which they fuffer decay, and finally diffolution. The growth and decay of minerals is fo flow and imperceptible, as to render it fometimes doubtful whether they are fufceptible of thefe qualities. Vegetables have organs by which they elaborate the nourifhment attracted from the earth and the air. Minerals feem to undergo no change but what arifes from the chemical action of bodies on one another.

The ancient naturalifts reftricted their inquiries chiefly to animals; they attended little to plants, and lefs to minerals. Their knowledge could not

eaſily be more extenſive. The ignorance of geography which then prevailed, the limited and difficult nature of literary communication, and the little aid which could be gained from books, afford cauſe of wonder that their progreſs ſhould have been ſo great, rather than of regret that it was ſo circumſcribed.

The modern naturaliſts poſſeſs advantages much ſuperior, and they have not failed to improve them. Commercial intercourſe, and voyages of diſcovery, added to literary peregrinations and correſpondence, have left unknown no important region almoſt on the face of the globe, and have communicated very ſatisfactory accounts of the greater part of the countries it contains. The kingdoms of animals and plants have been pretty fully inveſtigated, and minerals of late have been favoured with a large ſhare of attention.

Conſidering the popularity of natural hiſtory, how well calculated it is to afford the moſt pleaſant amuſement, if not inſtruction, and to diſplay the beauty and deſign of the works of nature, it is to be regretted that writers have rendered the ſtudy of it ſo unpleaſant, by the thorny and embarraſſed ſyſtems of arrangement they have adopted, and by the irkſome controverſies in which they have engaged concerning theſe ſyſtems. The philoſophy, alſo, of natural hiſtory has been hitherto

much neglected. Authors have confined themselves too much to the naked accounts of the productions, without tracing analogies, particularly in animals, and without investigating the tempers, constitutions, attachments, hostilities, generation, and manner of life of these animals. This part of the science, indeed, has already been treated with considerabie success by Mr Smellie. The great variety of new information, however, which has of late been obtained, might certainly furnish materials for extending his observations, and for forming a theory both amusing and instructive.

The second branch of knowledge relative to the structure of bodies, is medicine, the chief object of which is to explain the nature of the human constitution, the diseases to which men are liable, and the remedies by which they may be cured. Though the human body is one of the most curious pieces of mechanism which nature can present, and furnishes a most important subject of philosophical investigation, yet it was necessity, not curiosity, that produced the science of medicine, and led to its various improvements. A similar attachment to utility still confines the researches of the physician almost entirely to the human body, while much useful knowledge might be obtained from an attentive examination of the structure of other animals, whose organs and vital functions are, in many respects, analogous to those of man.

The bodies of men, like thofe of other animals, naturally accommodate themfelves to their fituation. If expofed to the feverities of climate, if accuftomed to exercife, and inured to wholefome, though coarfe fare, they acquire a firmnefs of texture, and a foundnefs of conftitution, which either repel the encroachments of difeafe, or fet its attacks at defiance. But when the efforts of art pretend to fet at defiance the operations of nature; when men attempt to adapt the climate to the conftitution, inftead of accommodating the conftitution to the climate, nature makes ample reprifals, and loads with maladies thofe who feek indulgencies reprobated by health. The art of medicine accordingly has been employed chiefly to counteract the inroads of luxury, and much ingenuity and induftry have been exerted to accomplifh this important defign.

The human body has been examined, and all its vital motions have been ftudied with the utmoft care. The knife of the anatomift has been fedulouſly and fometimes fuccefsfully employed, in inveftigating the ftructure and functions of the different parts of the body. The effects of thoufands of medicines have been tried, and the influence of air, exercife, and climate, have been obferved. Much learning, fagacity, and experience, have been exerted with affiduity and

perſeverance, to bring the healing art to perfection.

But, notwithſtanding the combined induſtry of ancient and modern phyſicians, the ſtructure and uſes of many parts of the body are ſtill involved in ſuch impenetrable darkneſs, that the nature of the changes which take place in diſeaſe, and the means by which theſe morbid changes are to be removed, are in many caſes perfectly unknown. From theſe cauſes, the ſcience muſt naturally be imperfect. From them alſo have probably originated thoſe abſurd conjectures and theories which ſo long diſgraced the healing art. Notwithſtanding theſe diſadvantages, the exertions of the phyſician, properly directed, are capable of affording the moſt eſſential ſervices to mankind.

Chemiſtry was the laſt branch of knowledge which regarded the ſtructure of bodies, and with ſome remarks on it I ſhall finiſh my view of the compartment of knowledge addreſſed to the underſtanding. It preſents a large field of inſtruction and amuſement. Its object is to diſcover the qualities of bodies by means of analyſis and compoſition, and to obſerve the reſults that take place from theſe operations. With this view, it inveſtigates the effects of air, light, heat, &c. on the bodies in nature, and all the changes which theſe undergo, whether from their ſpontaneous action on each other, or from the operations of art.

By analyfis the chemift endeavours to difcover the component parts of bodies, or to reduce them to their elementary principles. Compofition, or fynthefis, reverfes this procefs, and forms new compounds by the union of bodies which were formerly diftinct. The latter furnifhes the greateft number of truths, and thofe of greateft importance, as there are few if any operations in chemiftry in which fome combinations do not take place. Perhaps it is fcarcely poffible in any cafe to determine what bodies are elementary, and what are not, many being now difcovered to be compounded which were formerly confidered as fimple. To difcover elementary principles, however, is not the moft important part of the fcience. The exertions of the chemift fhould always be directed to difcover the laws on which the operations of his art depend, the order of the different combinations of bodies with one another, and the attractions which regulate thefe combinations. While chemiftry confines its inquires to thefe operations, it deferves every commendation, and repays, with much emolument, the labours of the philofopher. But this, like other branches of fcience, has been difgraced by the projects of empirics, who pretended not to inveftigate, but to rival nature. The fearch of the philofopher's ftone will ever exhibit a mortifying monument of vanity and folly. Though the en-

lightened and philoſophical ſpirit which has directed the inquiries of modern chemiſts, and rewarded their exertions with ſuch brilliant diſcoveries, affords reaſon to hope that ſuch abſurdities will never again make their appearance; yet it cannot be denied, that of late the proper objects of chemiſtry have ſometimes been miſtaken, and many have endeavoured to extend its principles to the explanation of phænomena to which they could not apply. Chemiſtry, however, has already done much, and promiſes to do much more. It has elucidated and explained many of the laws of nature, and ſimplified many of the proceſſes in the arts.

Though the underſtanding is the nobleſt faculty of the human mind, yet the exerciſe of it is not attended with the greateſt pleaſure. Many of its exertions are extremely fatiguing, ſometimes even painful; they are recommended chiefly by the importance of the conſequences they involve, and the aſcendancy they procure. This remark, however, applies chiefly to thoſe exertions which are purely ſcientific, and which are occupied about long and intricate trains of reaſoning. The moſt popular, the moſt familiar, and perhaps the moſt uſeful exertions, are engaged about the objects of the other faculties to which knowledge is addreſſed,—the memory, and the imagination. Memory is the faculty, the exerciſe of which yields leaſt employ-

ment, the chief ufe of it being to furnifh materials for the operations of the underftanding. But the imagination partakes deeply of the pleafure refulting from the contemplation of all the works of genius; and is the faculty, the exertions of which convey the moft exquifite fatisfaction that can be received, independent of moral fentiment, and the affections of the heart. In the moft captivating objects of the imagination, however, there is always intermixed a large portion of thofe qualities which recommend the objects to the underftanding, and gain its approbation. Without this feafoning, the objects of imagination may excite a tranfient furprife, or momentary gratification; but they will never pleafe upon reflection, nor will they long engage the attention of correct tafte. Even poetry muft prefent found fenfe, and a legitimate logic; and painting muft exhibit defign, propriety, and utility, before they can obtain a more favourable appellation than the offspring of a difordered or diftempered fancy.

I have offered thefe remarks to fhew how the objects of one faculty folicit the attention of another, and to circumfcribe the objects which I am now to reprefent as addreffed immediately to the imagination. The word *poetry* was appropriated to characterife thefe objects; but in this cafe it muft be extended much beyond its common ac-

ceptation. It muſt receive a ſenſe not reſtricted to metrical compoſition, but extended to all elegant productions of art, whether communicated by language, by the pencil, or the graving tool. It muſt comprehend, in a word, all ornamented or figurative compoſition, whether in proſe or verſe; the exertions of the ſtatuary, of the painter, and of the engraver; and the moſt meritorious exhibitions of the architect, of the muſician, and of the gardener.

As far as the objects of the imagination can be expreſſed by language, I have anticipated the view of them in the preceding courſe, in which it has been my endeavour, not only to introduce you to an acquaintance with them, but to render you judges of their merit, and to guide your exertions in ſimilar attempts. It remains, then, only that I conclude this ſurvey by ſome remarks on the other branches of knowledge I have mentioned.

The acquiſition of fame or fortune, has, in all ages, been the capital inducement to exertions of genius. To adorn temples and public buildings with ſtatues of the gods or heroes, preſented an honourable, and perhaps a very lucrative object of ambition to the ſtatuary of ancient Greece. To embelliſh churches, and to prompt ſuperſtition, afforded a flattering and moſt profitable employment to the painter of modern Europe. Never were

fine ſtatues ſo much admired as in ancient Greece. Never were fine paintings ſo much eſteemed as by the votaries of the church of Rome. The effects were correſpondent to the cauſes; the ſtatuary and the painting, in both caſes, were the moſt conſpicuous the world ever ſaw. Theſe arts, however, have now paſſed their meridian ſplendour; and whether they will ever recover their former luſtre and intereſt, future circumſtances muſt determine.

The ancient architect was the builder of the temples and public edifices, which the ſtatuary was employed to adorn; the former accordingly ſhared with the latter a large portion of the public applauſe and emolument. Both the ſtatuary and the architecture of Greece were tranſplanted to Rome, and, amidſt the affluence introduced from Aſia by the firſt emperors, exhibited many illuſtrious ſpecimens of excellence, which all ſucceeding ages have anxiouſly ſought and admired. But the ſplendid architecture of Greece, ornamented with pillars, pilaſters, and pediments, ſuitable to a climate of which the inhabitant ſcarcely needed other ſhelter than covering from the rain, was ill adapted to the colder and more northern climate of modern Europe. Pillars, and their ornaments, accordingly have either been baniſhed from architecture, or have been prepoſterouſly joined to walls where

they ſerve no uſeful purpoſe, while they obſtruct the communication of light. This art has of courſe relinquiſhed its ſplendour by conſulting utility. It has rendered habitations more convenient and comfortable; but hardly in the manſions of kings do we now diſcover many veſtiges of that ſuperb magnificence which we ſurvey with wonder in the remains of ancient architecture, or of which the accounts fill us with ſurpriſe. The courſe, therefore, of this art, like that of ſtatuary, is now retrograde; nor is it probable that it will ever regain its primitive grandeur.

Muſic and gardening, from oppoſite circumſtances, have ſhared an oppoſite fate. Among nations of warriors, as were the Greeks and Romans, muſic could not expect much influence; and in climates where nature reared, almoſt ſpontaneouſly, the uſeful plants, gardening could not much improve, either the productions or the ſoil. The pleaſant, healthy, and peaceable region of modern Italy, prompting all the more delicate and ſoothing emotions of the ſoul, has carried muſic to a degree of perfection that ſeems to charm the ear with every ſpecies of delight which ſound can convey; while the riches ſupplied by agriculture, arts, and commerce, have communicated to gardening, in more northern countries, the moſt extenſive culture of uſeful plants, together with every other

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